

**The Evil Tongue
TRYED,
And found
GUILTY:
O R,**

The Hainousness, and exceeding Sinfulness of Defaming and Back-biting, opened and declared.

Wherein is shewed, that a Defaming and Back-biting Tongue, is a most pernicious and grievous plague to man-kind.

Published for common good; namely, to convince the guilty of their sin, and perswade them to Repentance. To stop the mouths of Defamers and Back biters; and to caution all persons against this Epidemical and dangerous Evil.

By Stephen Ford, Minister of the Gospel in London.

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AN
EPISTLE
TO THE
READER:

Good Reader,

I Think these are the last dayes,
wherein (according to our Savi-
ours Predictions, Math. 24.)

Iniquity abounds. And amongst
many other notorious abominations
which are Rise and Rampant in this
Land among all sorts of men; the sin

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of Defaming & Back-biting, of casting dirt on each others good names and reputations, rendring one another odious and contemptible, is not the least, nor most rarely to be found among us; but rather one of the most common, general, and most pernicious wickednesses that is practiced and countenanced; and that by many who have escaped the pollutions of several other iniquities and like abominations. For sad experience shews, that such as will not swear or drink to excess, yet will Back-bite, Reproach, and Defame; such as will not rob men of their goods, nor murder their bodies, yet will freely rob them of, and murder their good names, as if they were in sport; yea, wipe their mouths, and say, they have done no evil; although they have thereby rebell'd against,
and

to the Reader.

and dishonoured God; given a mortal stab to the good names of men; exposed their own names to perpetual Reproach, and their Souls to everlasting Perdition; as assuredly such do as practice this wickedness, and are Countenancers of it in others; which have occasioned these lines which I have here written, and sent abroad into the world, for the detecting and laying open of this soul Monster; this pernicious and horrible wickedness; this prodigious abomination; that such as will, may see the ugly shamefulnes of it; loath and abhor it; flee from it; have nothing to do with it; nor with the practizers of it. That they may fence and arm themselves against it, and avoyd all occasions of it. If they have been guilty of it, they may Repent; if guiltless, they may be thankful. That
they

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they may Watch, Pray, and stand up, on their guard, that they enter not into temptation to commit this sin; or if tempted to it, they may resist it, and fight against it, as against a Soul-murdering Enemy, under the deep and piercing convictions of the Devil, and dreadful danger of it, if it should prevail and be entertained.

Reader, I shall not trouble thee with a long Epistle, but only to entreat thee to read, and seriously to mind these following particulars in thy passage to the Book it self.

1. I do entreat thee to lay aside all prejudice in reading of this Book, which may be moving in thy mind, either against the work or work-man, Read with a single and an unbyassed eye and heart, if ever thou expectest any benefit by what thou readeest.

2. See that thy aims and ends be
right

to the Reader.

right, and such as will be approved of in Heaven; namely, to find out the truth and will of God; to know thy self and sins more clearly, in order to a right and profitable practice and improvement of all, in order to repentance and amendment of what is evil, &c. and conforming to the will of God in that which is thy duty, and in all that God may be glorified, and thy Soul profited.

3. Pray for the Holy Ghost, to help and assist thee with light, life, and power; with quicknings, teachings, and convictions, that in his light thou may'st see thy own darkness and sin, and be enabled to make a right judgment of the Truths, asserted and opened in this book.

4. I do entreat thee to over-look all the humane weaknesses which thou may'st find in this book, and pass a

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charitable judgment on what may possibly occasion thy censure, and on the intention and design of the Author; and let not his frailties hinder thy acceptance of the great Truths laid before thee for thy Souls profit.

5. Weigh and consider with an impartial judgment what thou readest; and judg if the sum and substance of what thou findest here written will not hold weight in the Balance of the Sanctuary and right reason; and if it do, then receive, entertain, and improve it well for the truths sake, and thy own Souls sake.

6. If thou wilt avoyd this sin, detected and opened in this book, then I advise thee to observe & follow these few Rules.

1. Do all thou can'st to get and keep deep and working convictions in thy heart, of the greatness, hainous-

to the Reader.

nousness, and perniciousness of the sin of Back-biting, Defaming, and Reproaching. Labour to be thorough sensible of the horrible nature and prodigious consequences of it; how hateful and provoking to God; how mischievous to men, and pernicious to thy self?

2. Begin thy Reformation, or eschewing of it, with heart, tears, and bitter sorrow for what is past, and sue out pardons through the blood of Christ. Let deep humiliation, and serious Reformation go together.

3. If thou wouldest avoyd and eschew the said sin, then lay the Ax to the Roots of it, and endeavour the removal of the causes, or else thou may'st labour in the fire; thou may'st cut off some of the branches and fruits to day, but they will sprout forth again to morrow from the old Roots. Thou wilt

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wilt not long be able to divert or stop the streams, unless thou first drain the fountain. What the Roots and causes of this great wickedness are, thou wilt find in the book it self.

4. If thou would'st avoyd this sin, then avoyd the occasion and appearances of it.

5. Consider, and have thine eyes fixt on thy own deformities and filthy botches; the evils of thy own heart and wayes, and then thou wilt find work enough at home. Thou wilt find thy own heart reproach thee, and thy miscarriages reprove thee so, as that thou wilt have little mind to think or speak evil of others.

6. Remember and lay to heart the judgment to come, that the great and All-seeing God, whose eyes are now upon all thy wayes, will shortly judg thee as well as others.

7. Cons-

7. Commit thy self to the Lord in well doing, and entreat him to awe thy heart with his fear; to set a watch before thy mouth, and keep the doors of thy lips, that thou reproach not with thy tongue.

8. I entreat thee to read these few sheets once and again, (throughout), and yield up thy judgment and conscience to the light and authority of the Scripture-Reason thou shalt find in them. Read and ponder the whole, and then judg.

I shall hold thee no longer in the Porch, but commend thee to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to make thee wise unto Salvation.

S. Ford.

*Reader I desire thee to correct these
Errours, which have escaped the
the Press.*

PAge 3. line 9. put out that, p 6. l. 1. after do,
r. 7thly, p 8. l. 11. r. for, and put and,
p 10 l. 17. put out they are, p 16 l. 25.
for to r. for, p 25. for no r. any, p 26. l. 22,
for is r. are, p 31, l. 5, for upon r. open, l. 11.
for reported r. reputed, for Righteous r. Right-
ousness, p 73, l. 6. for improved r. improve, p 88,
l. 7, for your r. our, the 94 figures is misplaced,
p 103, l. 25, for deforming r. defaming, p 111,
l. 9, put out far, p 126, for confirm r. construe,
p 129, l. 8, for confirm r. confine, p 134, l. 16,
r. sw, p 139, l. 17, r. did, p 149, l. 20, put
out to, p 159, l. 14, r. Reputations, p 161, l. 5.
for into r. in, p 167. l. 5, r. persecuted, p 175.
l. 5, r. for by r. ly, p 184, l. 10, r. opprobrious,
p 192, l. 9, r. row, p 198, l. 7, r. Lewdness,
p 199, l. 6, r. their, p 208, l. 17, r. there,
p. 211, l. 6, r. fomenting, p 215, l. 26, r. sur-
mising, p 247, l. 2. for or r. as, p 257, l. 22.
r. Reproaches, p 261, l. 18. for under r. and of
p. 265, l. 10, r. 10, p. 279, l. 23. r. of.

There are many other lesser fauls, as mis-
pelling, and mispointings, which thou mayest
easily correct.



Hat it is the duty of all
 men in their several
 places and capacities,
 to hinder and obstruct
 sins growth and pro-
 gress; to labour to con-
 vince one another of
 their God-provoking,
 soul-wronging & soul-damning sins : and
 perswade each ether to repentance, as we
 have occasion and opportunity ; is con-
 fessed and acknowledged by all, who pro-
 fess to know Christ ; and by Heathens
 also. When a house is on fire, all (that
 can) do think it their duty, to endeavour
 to quench it : and when men in the pra-
 ctise of sin are running headlong to Hell,
 all that see it should labour to prevent
 them ; both by hedging up their way with
 thorns, that they may not find their paths,

as God doth : *Hosea 2. 6.* and by casting out to them Cords of Love to draw them back from sin to Christ , as God doth, *Hosea 11. 4.* I mean the threats and terrors of the Law, and the alluring and drawing arguments of the Gospel, to convince them of, humble them for, and perswade them off from their iniquities ; to return unto the Lord by true and serious repentance, to take up in him, and in the practise of holiness and righteousness towards God and men.

Wherefore I having observed, considered, and sadly experienced how rife and rampant that foul, pernicious, and damnable sin of reproaching and defaming one another is, amongst all sorts of men (a few serious souls only excepted) how diligent and assiduous men (especially women) are in that diabolical and hatefull work of casting dirt on each others good names, endeavouring to render one another odious, abominable, contemptible, and unserviceable to all men ; and by kindling flames of horrid jealousy, strife and contention (like the Devil)

Devil) among neighbours, friends and relations, and how (almost) every mans sword is set against his brother , and thrust into the heart of one another, I mean their good names : yea, and this great wickedness is very common amongst Ministers, who should be patterns of piety and righteousness before all men ; yet I say, that they are stabbing and murdering the good names of their brethren as I have known, and have yet many bleeding wounds to witness the truth of it, fresh upon me. And moreover, Considering that few or none have given their publick Testimony against the said abomination , or thoroughly endeavoured to put a stop to the contagion of it, by advancing the *Sword of the Spirit* against it, and so it passeth up and down every where without check or controul, as the *Pestilence that walketh in darkness, and the Sword that destroyeth at noon day*, Psal. 91. 6. I could not forbear, or refrain my self any longer from witnessing publicly against it, and endeavouring to cut it down with

the *Lords Sword of Truth*; which I shall endeavour to do as well as I can, being convinced and satisfied, that it is my duty so to do, what ever censures I may incur thereby from proud Spirits; for as he said in almost a like case, *Qui non malum prohibet cum potest facit*, so say I; If I do not all I can in my place to prevent the breaking out and practise of wickedness in others, as well as in my self, the guilt will lye at my door, and the holy God will, or may charge it on my head, which I shall now labour to prevent, and proceed in the light, Life, and power of Christ; who can supply me with all needfull abilities for this work.

1. To shew you the ends I aim at; and the design of my heart.

2. Reasons or Motives that induce me to it.

3. To State the Case, and shew what the sin is which I shall detect, arraign, condemn, and dehort from, and wherein it doth consist.

4. I shall lay open the horrid and abominable nature of it. And shew,

1. How

1. How hatefull it is to God.

2. How grievously pernicious it is to men who are reproached, and to others that hear it. 3. How dangerous and hurtfull to the souls of Reproachers themselves, who while they intend to kill and destroy such as they do reproach, they do indeed destroy themselves, though they will not believe it.

And that first, from the names that the Scripture gives them, I mean, the sin and the sinners.

2. From the Root, Spring, and Fountain of the sin.

3. From the nature of the sin.

4. From the natural and genuine fruits and Issues of it.

5. Shew how this Sin is aggravated and heightened: And that first, with respect to the Reproachers. 2^{dly}. The Persons reproached. 3^{dly}. The manner and way of reproachers procedures in reproaching. 4^{thly}. Their ends.

6. I shall shew, that receivers of Reproachers reports of others are as bad, and do sin against God, Men, and their own Souls,

as the Reproachers do answer Objections and Questions.

7. I shall shew how persons may avoid and abstain from the committing of this sin, if they will. There are other things which I may speak too, both on the Doctrinal and Applicatory parts of the discourses occasionally.

CHAP. I.

First, I shall briefly mention the ends and designs of my heart in writing these few Lines, which I hope are good.

First, to convince and open the eyes and consciences of such as are guilty of that so foul and abominable sin; that they may see their nakedness and shame; have the discovery of their great sin and wickedness, in defaming and reproaching, in violating, and murdering the good names of Men, smite, and deeply wound their consciences, and lay them under shame and sorrow.

2dly. To awaken their sad sleepy souls, and bring them to serious and thorough

rough repentance, that they may loath themselves, and repent in dust and ashes; that they hear and fear, and do no more so wickedly: That they may look on him whom they have pierced, by reproaching, and defaming; and mourn, and be in bitterness of soul, Zach. 12. 10. that they may turn from it, reject and forsake it, that so it may not be their everlasting ruine, *Exek.* 18 30. For if such do not particularly repent of so foul, horrid, and God-provoking a sin which they have often committed, they shall everlastingly perish, *Luk.* 13. 3, 5. but I would prevent their ruine.

3dly, To perswade such as are guilty of this sin, to do all they can with all possible speed to make restitution to them whom they have wickedly, violently, and villainously robbed of their rare and choice jewels (their good names); and give them all possible satisfaction for all the injurious wrongs they have done them; by healing what they have wounded, cleansing and purifying what they have abominably defiled and polluted

with their venomous tongues; without which not only men, but God also will hold them under guilt: for it is not sufficient when men have injured one another, that they confess it to God, and repent of it before him; no, but they must also do what they can to make restitution, and give satisfaction, to men whom they have wronged, or else be assured there is no pardon nor peace to be had of God, *Luke 19. 8.* and not only did converted *Zachus* do so, but even wicked *Judas* his conscience put him upon making restitution, *Mat. 3. 4, 5.* and so will thine, before God will acquit and clear thee whoever thou art.

4thly. A fourth end is to arm and fence men, to strengthen and help them against this sin, and to fortify them against all the Devils and his agents temptations, which they may meet withall, to prompt them to the committing of this sin. For the Devil, who is, and goeth about like a roaring Lyon, seeking whom he may devour; labours all he can to stir up malice, wrath, and envy in men against each other,

other, and to open their mouths to wound and tare one anothers good names, like roaring Lyons.

5thly. To manifest to guilty souls what danger they are in, and to shew them what need they have of suing out a pardon through the blood of Christ; and to give no rest to their eyes, nor slumber to their eye-lids (as *David* speaks) untill they by faith obtain a pardon from God, and also from such as they have wronged. For to abide securely under the guilt of so hainous and damnable a sin, one hour is exceeding dangerous; for how soon, how quickly, may God cut the thread of our lives; and then being under guilt, may fall into eternal flames of Gods wrath.

6thly. To work in men an enmity against it, and a hatred of it: that they may loath the very garments spotted with this cursed sin, that they may keep at a distance from it, avoiding the very occasions and appearances of it, defy and abhor it as they would, or do Hell and the Devil.

7thly. To shew such who are guilty of reproaching and defaming the good names of men, what a world of hurt and mischief they have done; how odious and loathsome they have made themselves, and those whom they have defamed. What irreparable breaches, and incurable wounds they have made on their own souls and names; and on the good names of others by this their wickedness; yea, it may be on the great and glorious names of the blessed God too; on his Gospel, ways, and people also; which undoubtedly they have done, if the persons reproached by them are strict and holy professors of Christ: especially, if they are, they are the Ministers of Christ, who in the generall course of their lives are serious holy men.

8thly. To provoke and quicken all persons to circumspection and watchfulness against this foul iniquity; *to set a watch before their mouths, and keep the door of their lips, that they reproach not with their tongues, as David, Psal. 39. 1.* and that in time of temptation, they may be on
their

their guard, ready to receive, resist, and oppose the Tempter.

9thly. To muzzle and tye up such poisonous tongues as will not otherwise be reclaimed, by the threats and terrors of the vengeance of God, which assuredly will overtake and light upon Reproachers, and defamers of men; especially, of good men; as I shall prove and make appear to all (through the help of God) the Apostle tells us, that we must endeavour *to save some with compassion, with much tenderness, but others with fear,* Jude 22.23. and the Apostle Paul charges, *to rebuke some sharply, that they may be found in the faith,* Tit. 1. 13.

10thly. To shut the ears of men against hearkning to, and receiving of the reports that Reproachers bring to them of others. It is a certain truth, that were there no healers, there would be no stealers; if there were no receivers of such accursed wedges, there would be no givers; were there no buyers, there would be no sellers of this poyson; would men
shut

shut their ears against them; as they would against Thieves and murderers; Reproachers might carry back their wares to Hell again, from whence they had them: And therefore I would put a gag into Reproachers mouths, and a pegg into their receivers ears, that thereby I may put a stop to the current of this abomination.

Lastly, To perswade persons to take heed and beware of those persons who are known to practise this abomination, and to reject all unnecessary communion with them; and have no more to do with them, then you would with known Thieves and murderers. And if at any time you are cast into their company, and hear them begin to medle with, or talk of, or by any means raise suspicion of a person; especially of a good man, and to spet their poyson on his, or her, good names, then presently to enter your protest against them, your abhorrence of their doings, and rebuke them sharply; that so they may be recovered out of the snare of the Devil, who sets them on to
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the work, and leads them captive to it; though they are his willing Captives. These are some of the ends I have in my eye and heart in this undertaking, that God may be glorified, and souls saved, in and by repentance and reformation.

CHAP. II.

SEcondly, the Reasons or Motives that have induced me to write on this Subject, are many; a few of them I shall briefly name.

1. I find many Professors of the name, and ways of Jesus Christ, to be very ignorant of this sin; yea, when they are reprov'd for it, are apt to say as common Swearers in their own defence, and by way of excuse; truly, They did not know that they did sin, by raising, or bringing up an evil report upon the good names of their neighbours and brethren; no not they; yea, and that which is much worse, they will dispute the lawfulness of it, and be displeased with such as labour

hour to convince them, especially, if they were not the first authors of it.

2. The dreadfull danger their poor souls are in, while they go on securely in the practise of this abomination, crying peace peace to themselves, whilst *they are adding drunkenness to thir st*, dishonouring God, wounding and stabbing their brethren, and pulling on wrath and curses on themselves, *Dent. 27. 24.*

3. The great scandal that this sin and practice casts upon Religion, especially, when done by professors of Religion; and assuredly this wickedness is almost every where found among them, I speak it with a grieved heart.

4. The consideration of the great wrong that is done to humane, as well as Christian Society and Communion thereby; how the good names of honest men are sooted and dirted, and their persons, words, and dealings brought under a wretched and groundless suspicion; their honour and esteem in the hearts of men lessened and impaired; their friendship broken and spoyled, and their usefulness

usefulness in the world greatly hindered and obstructed. Their parts, works and persons slighted, and contemned, and they are thereby made a scorn and derision to all men.

5. I find this wickedness to be a great hindrance to the free passage and desirable progress and success of the Gospel, both amongst Saints and Sinners; for reproaching tongues have so foully blackned and darkned many of the Lords Servants, yea, such whom the Devil himself cannot righteously accuse of any scandalous crime; that poor ignorant souls do not know what to think of, or how to receive or believe any thing of truth that Ministers preach, but are greatly stumbled at all the truths of Christ, they hold forth (though it is their sin so to be stumbled) and preach unto them: And assuredly this will lie heavy one day on the heads and hearts too of Reproachers.

6. The exceeding great wickedness and commonness of this sin, hath moved me against it, and to endeavour to lay
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the Lords Axe to the root of this Tree to cut it down, that it may no more cumber either the Lords, or mens ground. I do know that the contagion of this plague hath infected whole Families, yea, almost all persons in all Families. This poyson is so common, and the tongues especially of one Sect are so full of this deadly poyson, that it is a hard matter for any person who fears God, to escape the venome of it; It bites and wounds them both secretly and openly, night and day, at home and abroad. And a reproaching and backbiting tongue is so full of deadly poyson as that it will kill a man at a great distance, yea, further then any other Viper, Adder, or any Serpent can, yea, it is so extream venomous, as that it will murder a man insensibly, and he shall not know who did it nor when it was done. Oh! dreadful and cursed poyson.

7. Another motive that hath induced me to this work is the general silence of other men, whose abilities and opportunities to such a work, do far exceed mine: and I am satisfied, that it is a very needfull
and

and necessary work, and therefore it must be done by some, though not so exactly as it should be. For, shall the flood-gates of so exceeding great and abominable wickedness be set open, and none set their hands to shut them? shall mens good names be defiled and polluted, their souls ruined and destroyed, the name and Gospel of the blessed God be dishonoured and blasphemed, and good mens precious and unvaluable jewels be taken from them by rape and violence, by the cursed and blasphemous tongues of their enemies, and no man appear for them, and come in to rescue them out of those Lyons mouths, and slay those venemous beasts, that are so bloody and cruell, so subtle and formidable? What if we cannot do all we would in this matter, ought we not to do all we can? Doth not God expect it from us, and require it of us, and hath he not given us talents for that end and purpose.

8. Another motive or reason proceedeth from my own afflicted and grieved heart, and the deep wounds which my
enemies

enemies have made in my soul, by their malicious, slanderous, and backbiting tongues : whereby they have endeavoured both to shame and ruine me, by unrighteous and envious reproaches : although not one of them could ever prove or make good any evil against me: but when they have been demanded the reason of their reproaching of me, they have denied it, or excused themselves, by some pitifull excuses or equivocations; but would never stand to it. Indeed, one or two of them have plainly said, that they did hate me, and did desire to ruine me; and these dealt more ingeniously than the other, in following the conduct of their minds and consciences in the case, to a confession of their Crime, both as to the principle, and end of their reproaching. But intending to speak more fully to them in another place, I shall forbear to do it here.

9. The exceeding great trouble and grief that this sin hath brought upon my own conscience; for (with shame and grief of heart I speak it) *it was my sin.*
and.

and wickedness a long time; untill the Lord opened my eyes, to see the odious and horrid nature of it; and to lay its guilt at the door of my conscience: and because (as I fear) I never repented of so foul and God-provoking a sin as I should have done. It hath pleased God, in his infinite wisdom, to suffer others to give unto me the same measure as I have given to some, Mat. 7. 2. and to repay me with my own coyn. For, as I made bold with others good names, and took occasion to abuse them, even so have some dealt with me. But I shall speak more of this elsewhere.

10. The real love that I hope I have in my heart to the holy and glorious name, Gospel, and ways of God, and to the souls and reputations of men, especially Godly people, hath moved me to this work; for I hope, that notwithstanding, I cannot love nor serve them as I should, and desire to do, yet I have a peculiar and sincere love towards them: for I am not a little, but very much afflicted in spirit, to see how the blessed God

is

is dishonoured, his ways and people villified and reproached by slanderous and backbiting tongues; and cannot but desire and endeavour to put a stop to this so foul a sin.

Thus having briefly shewed you the ends I aim at, and the motives and reasons (at least some of them) that have moved and induced me to this work and undertaking, I shall now proceed to the opening of this sin, and to shew wherein it consists, or what it is.

CHAP. III.

Wherein the sin is opened and cleared, and the several ways and methods of backbiting, defamers, declared and manifested.

NOW the summe and substance of the sin I intend to discourse of, is this : to raise, uphold, divulge, receive and entertain an evil report of men, especially, of the Ministers, and people of God; irregularly, unjustly, or unduly, whereby his or their good names and reputations amongst good men,

men may be blemished or wronged, lost or taken from them, is the sin I purpose to open to you, and which is the sin that is so much condemned, and so often forbidden in Scripture, as I shall shew you anon.

This description of this sin is fully asserted in the Scripture, I shall name a few texts, *Thou shalt not raise a false report*, *Exod. 23. 1. Speak evil of no man*, *Tit. 3. 2. Speak not evil one of another*, *Jam. 4. 11. Eph 4. 31. 1 Pet. 2. 1. Psal. 15. 3. Lev. 19. 16.* These Scriptures declare what the sin is which respects the good names of men, especially good men. But for a more full information and conviction of all men; I shall add light and strength to what is above asserted, First, by explaining the words and terms used in the definition. *2dly.* Shew in what Cases it is a duty, and in what Cases, or under what considerations, it is a foul and God-provoking sin to speak evil of men, and to receive and entertain what is spoken.

First, To raise an evil report, is this,

1. To

1. To be the first author of it, either as forming and making it, without any cause or occasion given to thee by the person whom thou reproachest, or givest out an evil report on ; so that it is a sin of thy own making, not of his speaking or acting on whom thou layest it. Thus *Zeba* dealt with his Master *Mephibosheth*, 2 Sam. 16. 2, 3. and thus the wicked men did, who were sent to spy out the Land of *Canaan*, Numb. 13. 32.

2. Or by reporting and revealing irregularly, and unduly, the sins of men which we do certainly know, they have spoken or done, and which we ought to conceal both by the Law and Rule of Justice and charity; for if we see or hear a man sin, and so wrong himself, we are not, to wrong him too, and lay a heavier load on him, no, for that is directly contrary to the Command of Christ, *Mat. 18. 15. Gal. 6. 1, 2. If thy Brother sin against thee, go and tell him his faults between him and thee alone. And further, If a man be overtaken in a fault, ye that are spiritual, restore or set him*

him in joynt again, (as the word is) with a spirit of meekness : bear one anothers burden, and so fulfill the law of Christ. Do not go and blaze it abroad as wicked *Cham* did his Fathers nakedness, *Gen.* 9. 21, 22. do not crush his broken bones; no, says Christ, I abhor all such cruelty; it is contrary both to my nature and carriages towards you. I charge you to tell him, and keep it close between him and thee, untill thou see'st him incorrigible. I require you to set him, or his broken bones in joynt again, to relieve, support, and restore him; to help him to bear the weight that he hath already puld on his soul; not to burden him more. And says *Iesus Christ*, I have given you another Law and Charge (which is full of righteousness, your selves being Judges) to do to, and carry your selves to others, as you would, or Judge they should carry themselves and do to you, in the like case, *Mat.* 7. 12. and he tells us further, that such a practise is contrary to Love and Charity, *1 Pet.* 4. 8. for that covers a multitude of sins.

2. To

2. To uphold or maintain an evil report once raised on the good name, or reputation of another, is this, when men keep it in their hearts, and spread it further abroad, and by confirming it too, and keeping the remembrance of it alive in others minds, which otherwise would, or might have forgotten it; that is, when they renew their discourses of it with those to whom they have already revealed it; or speak of it to such as have not yet heard it. And hereby they do add sin to sin; multiply their transgressions, and declare that they are acted and carried by malice, envy, and the Devil.

3. The receivers and entertainers of such evil reports as are brought to them, are guilty of the same wickedness, that the givers are. For if there were no connivers and receivers, there would be no givers, nor sellers of this cursed pedlaring ware. The receivers and entertainers of this evil, are they who strengthen the sinews of such reports and reporters. For men would not speak to men, if those to whom they speak, had not ears open to hear

hear them; and the Receivers sin is so hateful to God, as that he hath assured us, that they shall not enter into Heaven, *no sooner then Drunkards, Whoremongers, or Idolaters shall*, Psal. 15. 3. 1 Cor. 6. 9, 10. Psal. 101. 5.

4. These evil Reports, are such, as in their own nature, and direct tendency, do defame, blemish, wrong, deprive, or rob men of their good names, their esteem and reputation amongst good men: And therefore some scandalous and notorious sin or vice is supposed and included in the evil Report: For vertue it cannot be, the report of that is honourable amongst all men; neither can the matter of it be any lawful word or deed, nor the defects, and deformity of our bodies; nor yet Poverty, Sicknes, or Weaknes; no, nor want of Parts, and Learning; but of necessity it must be some real, and generally known sin, that a person hath committed; or is so reported of him, to be committed, (though falsely) that is the matter of the evil report. And it is vice only, either done

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or

or committed, or reported so to be, that laies a man under shame, and hurts, or wrongs his good Name or Reputation amongst men. For *Solomon* tells us, that *Sin is a Reproach to any people*, Pro. 14. 34. Now as it is Vice, or Wickedness committed, that is the real matter of Reproach and Infamy on any person, as done or acted by him or them; and divulged so to be; or some Vice falsely reported of him, or them, to have been acted, or done by them; so defamers do raise, uphold, and spread that which is so indeed; with a design to reproach and render them odious, and abominable to men, though such do know they are innocent; or at least, they do not know them guilty of the sins they report them to be guilty of; or not so as they do report them to be.

5. The Reasons why, I say, especially the Ministers and people of God, is

1. Because an evil Report or Fame of them, on their good names, is more pernicious and destructive to the Gospel and waies of Jesus Christ, then when it is cast
on

on meer Civil and Moral men, as is generally known.

2. Because that their union with, profession of, and relation to Jesus Christ, makes them and their names far more excellent, and honourable, more precious and observable then other mens.

3. Because the evil report, or reproach which is laid on them, is (as they are such) laid on Christ, whose Image they bear. For they being made *partakers of his divine nature*, 2 Pet. 1. 4. and renewed after the Image of him that Created them, Col. 3. 10. When ever dirt is cast on their good names, it is cast on Christ also. But intending to say more of this matter else-where, I shall speak no more of it now. As to those expressions irregularly, unjustly, and unduly to raise, uphold an evil report, I shall further declare in what follows.

1. I shall now shew in what cases it is our duty, and in what cases it is our Sin, to reveal the Sins and evils of others. First, We may reveal the Sins of others according to the rule that Jesus Christ

hath given us to walk by. In *Math.* 18. 15, 16, 17. *ver.* where we are, 1. Com-
 manded upon certain knowledg of a sin
 committed by a perion, to tell him his
 fault, and to endeavour to convince him
 of it privately : But then in case of obsti-
 nacy, to take one or two more with us to
 deal with him, and to tell the persons
 what he, or she hath done ; what sin he
 hath committed, and they are together
 to endeavour to convince and bring him,
 or her, to Repentance. And then if the
 person thus dealt withal, by two, or
 three to convince him, will not hear
 them, but remain obstinate, then to tell
 the Crime or Sin committed, and all
 their procedures and dealings with the
 guilty person, to convince him to the
 Church ; and this in case the Offender
 be a Professor of Christ and Holiness,
 and the sin at first private : Now in this
 case the Law of Christ, and the necessity
 of such Procedures in order to the heal-
 ing, or restoring of the Offender, will
 justifie, and clear us in revealing his sin,
 yea it is our duty so to do. But first, it
 is

is necessity occasioned by the Offender himself, which he might have prevented ; would he have hearkened to the private admonition ; and so it is not any fault in those who reveal the sin to others, because they are in such revealing of it, but in the way of their duty. 2. In this procedure, special care must be had to the Law and Authority of Christ, it must be done ; and therefore we do it because Jesus Christ hath so commanded and appointed. 3. The root, principle, and end of such Procedures, must be Love, not Hatred, or Envy ; and to heal, and restore the Offender, to Repentance, to Communion and Peace with God, which he hath lost by his sin, *Lev. 19 16, 17.* And to prevent the increase and growth of his sin, to the dishonour of Christ, his Gospel, and People, and not to render him odious to others, as it is usual with men to do.

2. If a man sin openly, and before many persons, he hath by his so doing proclaimed his own shame, and exposed himself to reproach and obloquy. But now

in this case, the persons, who do see and hear it, are not to spread it further abroad, but to endeavour to Convince and restore him; unless they know him to be a common obstinate and prophane wretch, and one who trades in Wickedness, and will not hearken to, or receive admonition; and so much is held forth unto us of the Will of God in this case, in *Levit. 19. 16, 17. Gal. 6. 1, 10. Jam. 2. 8.* But intending brevity, as much as possibly I can in all things I shall assert; therefore I shall hasten.

3. We may in our own necessary defence, and vindication of our own Innocency in time of need, when called to it, reveal the wickedness we do certainly know them guilty of, which for ought we know, they have not yet Repented of; and that for this reason, namely, that the supposed Goodness, Holiness, and Righteousness of our Adversaries, who have accused us, and stand in Judgment against us under such Credit and Esteem for Holiness and Righteousness, as that thereby they are likely in a false Charge, or
wrong

wrong Cause to prevail against us, to our wrong and detriment: I say in such a case, in our own just and necessary defence, we may undoubtedly unvail and unmask them, & lay upon their Leperous spots, that they may be known not to be such, as do deserve so much Credit and Esteem, as that all they say or affirm against us, is upon the account of their Holiness, and reported Righteous, to be believed, and accepted. Thus *Mephibosheth* did in his own Vindication reveal *Ziba's* wickedness to *David*, 2 Sam. 19. 24, 25, 26, 27. I say in such a Case, it is meet and necessary that their certain and known wickednesses should be made known; But with this caution (*viz.*) that it be intended only to vindicate and clear our selves before men, and our just and Righteous cause; which otherwise will in all probability be mis-judged, and cause an unrighteous Sentence to pass against us; as *David* did on *Mephibosheth*, 2 Sam. 16 3, 4. A good man may be necessitated sometimes in defending his

Innocency, and Righteous Cause, to reveal the known wickedness of his esteemed Righteous Adversary, as *Mephibosheth* was ; and in such a case he may undoubtedly so reveal anothers wickedness, as to be justified by God, and all wise and holy men in his so doing.

4. Or in case some notorious wickedness be persisted in, after we have laboured with them, to reclaim and reform them, and have waited on them, and on God for them, and yet they will not be reformed ; and their sins are so grievous and burdensome to us, as that we cannot any longer endure, nor bear it patiently. I say we may then call on some good men to come in and help us, with their Counsel and Prayers ; and in order thereunto, declare the sins of men which do so much afflict and burden us, and that in order to their amendment, as well as our support and comfort ; and that if they be near Relations, or Friends ; for by so doing, we are still in the way of using means for their amendment ; and the Prayers, Instructions, and admonitions

ons of many serious holy men, may probably prevail and do more good, then of a few only : And in this case I doubt not, but that a Husband may reveal his Wives sins, and a Wife her Husbands sins; I say as the case is before circumstanced, they may ; But with these Cautions :

1. That the discovery we make to men of each others sins, proceed not from hatred, envy, wrath, or bitterness; we must have a special care of that.
2. We must first patiently wait for their Reformation, and amendment, in, and by our own serious endeavours, and private admonitions, prayers, and tears : For in this case, we must never reveal the sins of one another, until necessity constrains us so to do : And we know of no other way or means left to be made use of in order to the preventing of their everlasting ruine.
3. We must do it, I mean reveal the sins of one another with tenderness, pittty, and compassion to their Souls, with a design to recover them out of the snare of the Devil, and to perswade them to Repentance. So

that I say, take this case rightly, and understand it with these and the like Cautions; and I do not yet see any reason against it, but that the nearest Relations may discover such apparent and grievous burdensome sins of one another, being necessitated thereunto, through the refractoriness, and obstinacy of their persisting in them, after all proper means have been used privately to mend them; and proceeding with such a frame of spirit, in pursuance of the said ends, as are before specified. For, if I may make use of all proper means to heal and restore a Neighbour or Friend, which I do certainly know to practice wickedness, that his Soul may be saved in the day of the Lord; why may I not, if necessitated thereunto, make use of the same means for the healing and cure of my nearest Relations? having and using all special care that the report of their sins go no further then the good mens knowledg, whom I call in to help me in the work; and assuredly my so doing, though to, and of my nearest Relations, cannot in
the

the judgment of wise and holy persons be looked on, or taken to be an expressi-
 on of hatred, or want of real Love; for
 if they should so think or judg, the
 Word of God would confute, and re-
 prove them for their doing so. For in
Levit. 19. 17. saith God, *Thou shalt
 not hate thy Brother in thy heart; thou
 shalt in any wise rebuke thy Neighbour,
 and not suffer sin upon him:* so *Gal. 6. 1, 2.*
 Now if my Love to my Neighbour must
 constrain me to endeavour with him by
 rebukes, or admonitions, to convince
 him of, and deliver him from his sin;
 how much more should my Love con-
 strain me to do so, to my nearest Relati-
 ons, according to Christ his Law, *Math.*
18. 15, 16. whom I love more strongly,
 as in duty I am bound to do? and surely,
 if it be my duty to lift up my Neighbours
 Beast, when I see him fallen under his
 burden, and if I cannot do it by my own
 hands, I am to call on others to help me,
 in order to the effectual helping up of a
 fallen Beast, *Exod. 23. 5.* How much
 more should I shew my Love to a near
 Rela-

Relation, when I see him or her fallen, and lying under the weight and burden of sin? And if I cannot lift him or her up with my own hands, and endeavours, Am not I bound to call for more help, that so he might be effectually delivered? surely I am.

5. If I do certainly know any man intending or designing either by word or deed to do his Neighbour, or any other person, wrong; I am then bound first to endeavour to convince him of, and to dissuade him from doing it. But 2. If he will not be convinced or dissuaded, but persist in his resolutions, I am undoubtedly bound by the six and eight Commandements, to endeavour to prevent him of executing his intended mischief on my Neighbour, and that by informing him what evil is intended against him by such a person, and advise him to watch him, and endeavour to secure himself against him, *Act. 23. 13, 18. Jer. 40. 13, 14, 15, 16.*

6. I may reveal sins that I do certainly know to be practised by a person which

which do indeed, and in truth so far as (without prejudice against the person) I can discern of him, declare and evidence him, not to be the man he is lookt upon to be, by those who have but little acquaintance with him, and as he is reputed to be. For although he or she be reputed to be just and honest dealers, yet I do certainly know them to be Cheaters and Defrauders: They are reputed to be diligent and careful in their Callings, but I do certainly know them to be Idle, careless Prodigals: Or they are reputed to be persons of Abilities, and so fit to be trusted by men; but I do certainly know that they are but whited Sepulchers, poor and beggarly, and not fit to be trusted: Or, they are reputed to be sober and temperate persons, but I do know them to be Gluttons and Wine-bibbers. Now, I say, if any good men or friends, who do think that I do know the Conversation of such a person or persons, better than they do themselves, shall ask, and earnestly desire me to give them my judgment, and declare what I do certainly

tainly know of them, their walkings, and dealings; because they would be satisfied concerning them, either to reject, or accept them; either first by taking them, or any of them into a conjugal Married Relation. Or secondly, into Church-fellowship, and so into a spiritual Communion with themselves. Or thirdly, To take them into close and intimate friendship, and to make them the keepers of their Secrets, as *David* and *Jonathan*, *Sampson* and his *Friend*. Or fourthly, To entrust either goods or money, or work in their hands. Now then, if I do know them not fit, or qualified for any of the aforesaid purposes; and being asked and desired so to do, I may undoubtedly declare and make known unto them what, I do upon my own personal knowledg know of them, with a watchful eye; that my judgment be no way blinded, or warped, either by hatred, envie, wrath, pride, or prejudice; and to be sure that I do report, and declare of them, not any thing upon hear-say, or vulgar reports, nor any jot, or tittle more, than I do
clearly

clearly see and know : and here also I must be very careful, that a wretched Jealousie and suspicion do not delude and lead me out of the way. And here we must have a special care that we do not in revealing the sins of men, desire and intend to defame them ; nor yet declare them to any other persons than are concerned to know them.

7. If I do certainly know that Children or Servants are wicked, and do prodigally abuse their Parents or Masters good Names, Estates, or the times they should improve according to their trusts in their Service ; or are guilty of Swearing, Cursing, Stealing, Sabbath-breaking, or the like, and their Parents and Masters be ignorant of their wickedness : Then I say it is my duty (if I can) to inform their Parents and Masters of their sins in order to their being admonished and corrected, and thereby reformed by their Parents and Masters. So good *Joseph* did inform his Father *Jacob* of his Brethrens wickedness, *Gen.* 37. 2.

8. If

8. If I do certainly know that such or such men do hold, and preach dangerous and pernicious Doctrines, tending to the corrupting of the truths of God, and the judgments of their Hearers ; I may, yea it is my duty to caution and warn men, especially the people of God, of them, and dissuade them from hearing them preach ; and that I may the more effectually prevail with them, to desist from hearing them, I may lay open to them what dangerous errors they do hold and preach, because hereby I do prevent the ruine of their Souls, and their learning to corrupt the glorious and holy truths of God ; so *Paul* and *Timothy*, 2 *Tim.* 5. 14, 15. and the *Romans*, chap. 16, 17, 18. vers. and the *Galathians* and *Philipians*, 3. 1, 2.

9. If men deal unjustly or injuriously with me, and thereby constrain me to deal severely with them ; as to prosecute the Law against them, or the like : and being demanded the reasons of my procedures against them in such a manner ; I may undoubtedly declare to them their

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unrighteous and injurious dealings with me, for their satisfaction, and my own vindication. Or in case I am required to give a reason why I do deny such persons some things they do require of me, and pretend they are their due; I may for mens satisfaction, to prevent offence, and for my own Vindication, declare the reasons of my denying to give them such things as they demand, and shew (if it be so in truth) that such, or such wickednesses of theirs, have caused me to withhold them from them, or that they belong not to them.

So likewise, in case I have given my consent to the Excommunication of a Member of a Church, of which I am a Member; and I am asked the reasons of my consent, or why that person was cast out; I may declare his sins, and refusing of the Churches admonition; and not wrong the person by my so doing; and that for the vindication of the Churches honour, and their legal proceedings with him; and also for the satisfaction of such as are dissatisfied.

10. I may reveal such sins of others, as I do certainly know them to be guilty of, by which they have wronged and injured other men, when I am required so to do by Authority; and, that in order to the Judges giving a true and righteous judgment of the matter in Controversie between man and man, which they must do upon certain evidence of matter of fact, given them by such as know it; for otherwise, they will walk in the dark, and give a wrong judgment; Condemning the Righteous, and Justifying the wicked; or give away a mans right from him, through want of light.

But know, that there is no affinity, or likeness at all, between mens discovering the sins of one another, for such reasons, upon such occasions, and emergencies, in such a manner, and for such ends as have been in part declared; and the actings, and proceedings of defaming Back-biters against the good names of men: No, they are vastly different, for they cannot pretend to have such calls
and

and occasions, such designs, and ends in their defamings as those men have, of whom we have spoken before, as will be further declared afterward.

Now in these, and such like Cases, in such a manner, and to, and for such ends as have been before mentioned, we may reveal, and discover the sins of others; I mean such sins and errors as we do certainly know they are guilty of, and continue to practice and hold. And thus having shewed what the sin I am detecting of, is not; I shall now proceed to shew what it is, or wherein it lies.

2. Now Secondly, This sin is (as hath been shewed) an irregular, unjust and undue raising, upholding, receiving, and entertaining an evil report of any man, especially of Gods Ministers and people, whereby his or their good names and reputations amongst good men may be blemished, wronged, lost, or taken from them. And this is done both secretly and openly, either to one or to many, either behind the persons back, or before his face.

Second-

Secondly, it is committed either by their reporting that of him, or them, which tends to their infamy and reproach, which they are wholly guiltless of, and so it is a sin of the Reporter his own making; Or secondly, by unjust, irregular, and undue reporting of that which may have some reality and truth in it.

First, Now, this sin and wickedness is committed secretly, and behind the mans back, that is defamed; and this way of Reproachers doing it, is most common and frequent; for it is a sin so odious and hateful, so filthy and abominable, that generally it is ashamed of its self, to have its ugly face and cloven foot seen in the light; and therefore it may well be called one of the *unfruitful works of darkness*, Eph. 5. 11, 12. compared with chap. the 4th. 31. *verse*. and this sin as so committed in the dark, and behind mens backs, whom it hurts and wounds, is called *Whispering, and Back-biteing, and a shooting privily, or in secret*, Psal. 41. 7. *All they that hate me, whisper together*

*ther against me ; against me do they de-
 vise my hurt, Prov. 16. 28. Rom. 1. 29.
 2 Cor. 12. 20. Rom. 1. 30. Psal. 15. 3.
 Pro. 25. 23. 2 Cor. 12. 20. They shoot
 their Poysoned Arrows privily and secret-
 ly, Psal. 11. 2. Psal. 64. 3, 4. Well (saies
 God) I will shoot my Arrows of Vengeance
 at them, and that before they are aware of
 it, I will be upon them, Psal. 64. 7. ver.
 But God shall shoot at them with an Ar-
 row, suddenly shall they be wounded.
 These Whisperers and Back-biters are
 like Vipers which will lie in a secret
 place and bite a man, and he not know
 from whom the mischief came : wounded
 he is in his good name, but he must by no
 means know who wounded him : but
 more of this anon.*

2. As there are some, and the far
 greater number, who do practice this
 wickedness secretly and closely, and
 therefore are called Back-biters and
 Wisperers ; so there are others of the
 same Tribe and Spirit, who practice this
 sin more openly, who are so confident
 and

and audacious in the practise, as that they dare cast their Fire-brands at, and blaspheme God and man in the sight of the Sun, and reproach without fear, the good names of men : and such impudent *Rab-shakehs* do plainly shew that they do neither fear God, nor reverence men; nor are they at all ashamed of their wickedness, though known and read of all men, but glory in their shame; and as the Apostle describes them in *Rom. 3. 13, 14, 15. Their mouth is full of Cursing and bitterness*; so that this sort of Reproachers are by the Holy Ghost, called *Railers and Revilers*, *1 Cor. 5. 11. 2 Cor. 6. 10.* which are confessedly ownd and acknowledged by all men, to be the very dross and scum of the world, such as are the shame and loathing of man-kind; and such as are under the just Censures and Condemnation of all men; yea, so vile are they, that the Apostle forbids civil Communion with them, *to Eat or Drink with them, 1 Cor. 5. 11.* These Reproachers are the winged flying Serpents, who can sting and bite a man as well when

when he is in Company with many, as when he is alone. But I need not speak much of this sort of Reproachers; for, although they are a most vile and loathsome Generation of High-way Villaines, yet they are not in many respects so bad, hurtful, and pernicious, as Back-biters and Whisperers are, who spit their Poyson on the good names of men more secretly and subtilly, as I shall declare by and by. For these open Reproachers do carry such a brand, and black mark of infamy in their foreheads, and are so abominable and hateful to all men, and *the shew of their Countenance doth so plainly witness against them,* as it said, *Isa. 3. 9.* as that no man will believe them, nor give any Credit to their words, though confirmed with never so many Oaths, as experience shews. But now those cunning and subtile Whisperers and Back-biters, they do so play their game, and by the help of the Devil, so wilyly manage their Diabolical work, in reproaching and defaming, as to get Credit to their words and evil reports; and as they have thereby

by the advantage of the open Reproachers (*their Brethren in the same iniquity*) to do much more mischief in their Trade, so (as was said) they are 'far more numerous; for Back-biters do swarm every where; there are almost as many of them, as there are men and women in the world (a few serious holy Souls only excepted). Now both sorts are employed in and about the same work, namely, to Reproach and Defame, & to render men odious and contemptible one to another; only with this difference, the Back-biter, bites more secretly, the other more openly; the one doth it in the dark, the other in the light. But is the back-biting Reproacher any whit better then the open Reviler? or is he less pernicious unto men, because he murders men more secretly? No, in no wise; he is more dangerous and hurtful than the other; as a secret Enemy is more dangerous than an open one, and a Serpent hid from our eyes is more dangerous to us, than if we saw it: for if we see our Enemy, we may possibly avoyd him, or fight him; or

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we may escape from the Serpent that lies in wait for us ; but now Back-biters kill men before they are discovered to lie in wait for them. They are the base wretched Cowards, who dare not look a man in the face, when they assault him ; but they do most basely thrust their invenomed swords through their backs, and so wound them to the very heart, in a most base, cowardly, and treacherous manner. They are like the Foxes, who will do all the mischief they can, but dare not be seen ; so that upon the whole, I may call the open Reproacher, a Gentleman, though a Cursed one, in comparison of the back-biting Reproacher.

Wherefore it is exceeding strange to me, that such secret or back-biting Reproachers, who do the same work, and commit the same Villany, by Robbing and spoiling men of their good names, which the open Revilers do, should look on themselves, and be thought by others, to be lesser sinners, or more excuseable and pardonable wretches then they ; for let it be wisely and impartially weighed

in the ballance of reason and experience, and it will be found, that the close, subtle Reproacher is as bad, yea, worser than the open Blasphemer and Reproacher. For is not a Thief, who robs me secretly, as bad, or worse, than he who attempts to do it openly? Is not a Murtherer, who kills a man secretly, and by unexpected Treachery, worse than he that kills him openly; the latter gives him the opportunity of defending himself, and trying it out with him; but the other surprizeth him, and takes away his life without giving him any notice of it. So he that reviles me openly, gives me opportunity to debate the matter with him, and to vindicate my self; but the other doth not. Back-biters spread their slanders far and near before I hear of it, and when I do know it, yet I know not who was the Author of it, nor how far 'tis gone, nor how many it hath poysoned, or infected; for the Author is hid, he dares not be seen or known to be the person. For there are two things, which in an especial manner he intends, desires, and

and labours to obtain. First, to smite the person he reproacheth to the quick, to the life, to give him such a dead stab and wound, as may never be cured or healed again; as *Abishai* said to *David*, 1 Sam. 26. 8. *Then said Abishai to David, the Lord hath delivered thine Enemy into thine hand this day; now therefore let me smite him, I pray thee, with the spear, even to the Earth at once, and I will not smite him the second time.* So a Back-biter saies in his heart, I have an object of my hatred or envy delivered into my hand; I will smite him to the ground, so as that he shall never rise more, I would make him such a wound in his good name, as should be incurable.

2. His next care is to conceal himself; he would not have it known by no means, that he hath defamed or reproached such a person; he is all for privacy. Oh, say Back-biters, pray let it not be known that I have spoken such words, or of such matters. They are like Thieves, who will be sure to get the prize, to take the

purse he desires and waits for; effectually to rob the man his eye is upon, and if possible, to leave him not worth a penny; I but then his next care is, how to hide, abscond and conceal himself, that he may not be found out to be the man; just so do the cursed generation of Backbiters, they will smite a mans good name, that he die, but then they flee away and hide themselves, like cursed *Cain*, Gen. 4. like *Sifera*, Judg. 4. and like *Absalom*, 2 Sam. 13. 28, 29, 37. They dare not stand to the Tryal, because their evil guilty Consciences have already Arraigned and Condemned them, but still they are ready to practice as they did before.

1. The evil report that such do raise on the good names of men, is either wholly false and groundless, or secondly, there is some truth and reality in it. Now if it be false and groundless, then the Reproacher is a perfect, real *Slanderer* and *Liar*, and so the Scripture calls him, 2 Sam. 19. 27. Psal. 50. 20. Psal. 101. 5. Psal. 109. 2.

2. Or

2. Or secondly, there is some truth and reality in it, that is, the person reproached hath done or spoken some evil, and so he hath given an occasion of speech to the Reproacher ; but yet, though he have done so, and therefore is not wholly guiltless, yet I say, he that takes hold of the occasion offered him, to report it, and spread it abroad, and thereby exposes him to *odium* and contempt, and that without a call or reason for his so doing, he is in his so doing a slanderer, especially if he do augment and aggravate the fault behind his back, and endeavour to possess others with all that he reports of him, labouring to blast and dirt him, and to make him hateful and loathsome. Now for the confirmation of this, look into the 1 Sam. 21. *David comes to Abimelech at Nob, with a lie in his mouth, ver. 2. And David said unto the Priest, the King hath Com-manded me a business, and hath said unto me, let no man know any thing of the business where about I send thee, and what I have Com-manded thee ; and I have ap-*

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pointed my *Servants* to *such and such* a place, which indeed was not so; for he was fleeing from *Saul*, as the 20th. chap. shews, and the 10th. verse, to the end of the 21. chap. When he was come to *Abimelech* the Priest, he gave David Food to eat, and a Sword to wear, 6. & 9. ver. *Doeg* the Edomite saw and heard this, ver. 7. and he informs *Saul* of what *Abimelech* had done to David, chap. 22. 9, 10. Now if you look into the 52 *Psa.* you shall find it pen'd upon *Doeg's* informing of *Saul* what he saw and heard done between *Abimelech* the Priest, and *David* at *Nob*; for so runs the Title, or rather the first verse of it. *A Psalm of David when Doeg the Edomite came and told Saul, and said unto him, David is come to the house of Abimelech.* Why, did not *Doeg* tell the truth of them, what he saw and heard them speak and do? yes, he did so, compare the 21 Chap 6. 9. and Chapt. 22. 9, 10. and the 7th. verse of Chapt. 21 But notwithstanding, *Doeg* spake the truth of what he had seen and heard in a wicked slanderous manner, and to an evil end;

end; namely, to provoke and stir up *Saul's* wrath against them, and to render them odious to *Saul*; and probably by augmenting and aggravating what was truth. This *Doeg* is branded with, and accused of evil speaking, devising mischiefs, working deceitfully, doing injustice, of lying, and speaking devouring words; that is, slandering and killing words; whereupon God threatens to destroy him, and that to the comfort and satisfaction of the Righteous. This you may see in several verses in the 52 *Psal.*

Now, are not all secret Back-biters, and open Revilers, the same in their natures, works, and ends? do they not travel with mischief, gratifie their Lusts, obey the Devil (who doubtless imployes them) in the work of defaming? do they not walk with slanders, as it is said, *Jer.* 6. 28. hurt and devour their Neighbours and Friends, dishonour and provoke God as *Doeg* did? and shall they not have their wickedness rewarded, and recompenced with the Vengeance of

God, as he had ? Oh consider it well, is *Doeg* his sin an Abomination in him ? and is not the same sin as abominable in you ? do you loath and condemn it in him, and justifie it in your selves ? did the holy and just God punish *Doeg* for it, and will He let you go unpunished ? will not God *tear you in pieces*, Psal. 5c. 22. for your tearing the good names of your Neighbours ? Is not the All-seeing and Jealous eye of God upon you, and is he not privy to all your waies ? and will he not render to every one according to his works, whether they be secret or open ? *Rev. 2. 23.*

Another instance to confirm this truth, namely, that although persons may be really guilty of what is reported of them, I mean for the substance of it, yet the Reporters of it may be, and are guilty of slander : in a slanderous manner of reporting of that which is true, is in *Numb. 13. 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33.* compared with *Dent. 11. 23.* and *Joshua 15. 13, 14.* I shall give a few hints on these Scriptures. In the 13th. Chapter of *Numbers*
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we have an account of men sent to spy out the Land that God had given to *Israel*; accordingly they went and searched out the Land, and returned to *Moses*, and told him what, and who they had seen and observed there. And first, they do highly commend the Land, *ver. 27.* *And they said, We came unto the Land whither thou sentest us, and surely it floweth with Milk and Honey.* Then they tell him of the strength and greatness of the Cities and people of the Land, *ver. 28; 29.* and also they tell him that they were not able to go up against them, because the people of the Land were stronger than they. This is the substance of the Relation, and account, they give of the Land. Now if you look into the 11th. Chapter of *Deut. 23.* *ver.* you shall find *Moses* telling the people the same, that the people had before told *Moses*; *Then will the Lord drive out all these Nations from before you, and ye shall possess greater Nations, and mightier than yourselves.* And whereas the people told *Moses*, *Numb. 13. 33.* that there they saw

the Giants, the Sons of Anak, which was true, for such persons were there, which were expelled afterwards by Caleb, Joshua 15. 13, 14. But yet notwithstanding it is expressly said in Numb. 13. 32. that the spies brought up an evil or a slanderous report of the Land, which was their great sin, and for which the Lord cut them off, Numb. 14. 37. Even those men that did bring an evil report (or a slander,) as it is in the 36 vers. upon the Land died by the Plague before the Lord, Ester 3. 8. By which Texts we are informed, that men may be guilty of slandering, by, and in speaking much truth in their reports of persons or things; although the Reporters did not simply and absolutely make and forme the matter of the reproach; but from their wicked hearts, and vile tongues they have slanderously reported a true fault of another, to brand him with ignominy, contrary to the rules of Justice and Charity; by adding to, or aggravating of the sin; he is guilty of committing the sin of slander, and he is a real slanderer in the
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judgment of Scripture ; and he is the person which the Scripture condemns. And that plea, namely, that he can prove the person defamed to be guilty of the very sin he hath reproached him for, will not at all excuse him, or render him guiltless at the bar of divine Justice ; or considerably extenuate and lessen his sin, or any way acquit and clear him from being a Slanderer and Reproacher, as I shall more fully demonstrate in the process of this discourse ; although I think I have said enough already to confirm this assertion, namely, that not only he, who raises a false report on a person out of nothing, is a slanderous Reproacher ; but also he who doth irregularly and unduly, contrary to the rules of Charity and Righteousness, with any additions or aggravations spread abroad or make known to any person or persons, the real sins of others, whereby they may be defamed or rendered odious unto men. But before I leave this head, I shall briefly declare and open how Reproachers do proceed and carry on, manage and prosecute.

fecute this their cursed and devillish work of defaming and reproaching men ; what subtle and cunning shifts and slights they do make use of, in order to the destroying of others, and saving themselves from blame. And here I shall speak only of the whispering and back-biting Reproacher.

1. As a most false-hearted wretch, he will speak you fair, and give you sweet words, and tell you he is very glad to see you, and the like ; that so, he may by those *flattering words deceive you*, as the Apostle speaks, *Rom. 16. 18.* and hide the poysonous venom of their hearts and tongues from you, that you may not suspect them ; yea, they will commend and cry up before your face some real or supposed Vertue they pretend to see in you, that so you may be the more open-hearted to them, and converse the more sweetly and fearlessly with them. They are butter-mouth'd Vipers, such as David complains of, *Psal. 55 21.* saies he, *the words of his mouth were smother than butter, but War was in his heart :*

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his words were softer than oyl, yet were they drawn swords: so did *Ismael*, the Son of *Nethaniah* deal with *Gedaliah*, Jer. 41. 1, 2. He had a design to kill *Gedaliah*; and that he might the more secretly, and effectually accomplish his bloody purpose, he eats and drinks with *Gedaliah*, as if he had been his good friend. So *Cain*, he would go with *Abel* his Brother, with an offering to the Lord, and he talked with him, as if he had loved him; but his heart was bent to murder him, Gen. 4. 3, 4. 8. And did not *Judas* do the same to **Christ**? yes, he comes to him with a *Hail Master*, and kissed him, Math. 26. 49. Now such dissembling Hypocrites, such treacherous *Judas*es are the generality of back-biting Slanderers. O! they will creep into your bosoms, but by and by they will stab you in the back, and wound you to the heart.

2. This sort of Reproachers are very inquisitive after persons, and they will gad about to hear News of others, if they think they have not enough brought home to them, to keep them at work;
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and they will be asking what such a man is, and what he doth, or what fault or miscarriage they know by him; and if they can get nothing from him, then they will start another, and another, and so on until they have loaded themselves; and if they have (as they think) gotten that prey they sought after, then away they go, and publish it to others; and as a requital to them, they will tell them to whom they went for News, what evil they pretend they hear of such and such persons. But if they cannot obtain their desire there, they will go elsewhere, resolving not to return home empty, but to gather up whatever they can find; and therefore their whole discourse shall be to that purpose; such as these the Apostle reproves, *2 Thes. 3. 11, 12. 1 Tim. 5. 13.* These are some of the Vermine which devour the good names of others. These are some of the *Diggers* that *Solomon* speaks of, *Prov. 16. 27. An ungodly man (especially women) diggeth up evil, and in his lips there is as a burning Fire.* This Scripture points them out to the

life, and experience confirms the truth of it. *Their feet run to evil*, Prov. 1. 16.

3. These persons will raise suspicions in persons, of others, not by plain and particular charging of them with any particular evil, especially if they are famous for Godliness and Righteousness, for that their subtle heads know will not so soon take, or be received; but they do it by casting out some general words and speeches, and by more general hints; and carefully observing how they are received and entertained of them that hear them. They will say, did you hear nothing of such a man or woman; I wish it be not true, though they do really desire it may be true, I hope it is not; but truly I cannot tell what to say of it, but I know what I know, but I will not speak all I do know; I could say more, but I will not now; he hath had the name of an honest man, but I wish it prove so in the end; where there is smoak, there is some fire. By these and such like speeches and manner of speaking they do insinuate, and beget evil surmisals and suspicions

ons in the hearts of men, against their Friends and Neighbours. This is another Pestilent and cursed device, and practice, that these Slanderers have and use to reproach men withal, which was an old device and practice of their Father the Devil; thus he reproached God to *Eve*, *Gen. 3.* thus he reproached *Job* to God, *Job. 1. 9, 10.* and by this means they drive a successfull and fruitful Trade against the good names of men. And if they find the persons to whom they suggest these things to be for their turn, ready and forward to comply with, and hearken to them; it rejoyceth their hearts, and then they will proceed a little further with them, until they have possessed them with their slanders, and with evil thoughts of such whom they have traduced. Or,

4. Fourthly. If that device will not take, nor proceed, and succeed according to their minds, then they will try what they can do by speaking slightly and undervaluingly of their birth, breeding, parts, or carriages; endeavouring
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by this means to debase them ; for when they cannot handsomly fasten any general or special sin on them, then they will do it with what weapons they can, rather than set out, and want work; endeavouring to render them very unworthy persons, and such as deserve not any honour or respect from them. Oh ! such a one, what is he, or she : alas ! he is a poor silly ignorant man, he can hardly give a man an answer : he is a poor inconsiderable fellow, he hath neither grace nor gifts, neither breeding nor carriage, nor any thing commendable in him ; he is a sordid man, not fit for Communion or society for such as you are.

5. They will take hold of any small hint, they have heard of sin committed by him whom they have a mind to slander ; and though if (it be true) it is but a Mole-hil in comparison, they will presently entertain it, whither true or false, they care not, and make it a great Mountain, and accordingly publish it to men. Thus the Pharisees came to Christ, accusing his Disciples for not fasting as they did,

did, and made it a great crime, *Mark 2. 19, 20.* and it is certain, that Reproachers do usually catch evil reports of such as they have a mind to defame hastily; not desiring to examine whither the matter be true or false; but glad they are of the occasion that is offered them to reproach; and as they are with *Benhadads* Servants ready to catch every word they hear of them to their Reproach, so if it be little and light when it comes to them, they have the art of adding weight to it, and multiplying of it, that so it may pass the more freely and currantly. Thus *Saul* dealt with *Jonathan* his Son, *1 Sam. 14. 43, 44.* *Jonathan* had but tasted a little honey to refresh him, when he was faint and weary, contrary to his Fathers rash adjuration, and *Jonathan* must die for it; and at another time, when *David* had his due praise given him for his valour and faithfulness, his success and victory over his Enemies; the Crime was so great, or at least *Saul* made it so great, that *David* must die for it; and such wretches are all Reproachers. If
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any good man carry away the glory from them, or as they think, do stand in their way and light, or have been as the Apostle speaks, *overtaken in a fault*, presently their good names, which are nearer and dearer to men than their lives, must die for it; and these back-biting slanderers will execute them without trial, judgment, or process of Law.

6. These back-biting Slanderers will seemingly put on the bowels of pitty and compassion, when they do reproach some men; and declare that what they speak of them, it is not their delight, but their sorrow and grief; though the holy God and their own Consciences (if they have any Consciences left in them) tells them they do lie. Oh! say those Hypocrites, and whited Sepulchres, when they are either raising or spreading an evil report of men; we are grieved at our very hearts, that such men as they should be under Reproach. Oh! we wish we could do them good; and this they do because they may be the more readily and easily believed; and that their words may pierce

pierce the deeper into the hearts of their hearers ; and also, that their own cloven feet may not be seen. Now though their grief without, lies in joy within, as they cannot deny ; yet this generation of men and women are so wicked, as that they care not who they do deceive, though with it they do deceive their own Souls ; nor who they kill with their poysonous tongues, though with *Sampson* they do by the death of their good names, destroy their own Souls, so they may but be employed with success in the work. But the Hypocrisie of these men cannot well be hid from such as have a desire to know them ; for their reproaching and abusing them more and more, doth clearly shew that they are not at all sorry for them.

For, can any man in his right wits believe that I am sorry for a man that is wounded, while he sees me beating and wounding of him more ; or that I am sorry, that a man is under a heavy burden, when I do unnecessarily lay on a heavier load on his back ; or that I am sorry for a man whom I have wronged,
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while I am doing him more wrong; why, this is the true case of back-biting Slanderers, who pretend that they do defame him with hearts grief, because they do hear he is already defamed. But were it true indeed, as they pretend, they would be so far from spreading his reproach further, as that they would do all they can to obstruct and hinder the growth of it; their hearts grief would issue and run forth into endeavours, to convince the Sinner of his sin, and bring him to Repentance, as commanded, *Levit. 19. 16.* and then proclaim his repentance in order to the healing and restoring again of his good name to him amongst men; and in the mean time, do all they can to put a stop unto the evil report that is raised upon it.

7. Again, seventhly. These back-biting Slanderers, in their Reproaching of men, will pretend that they do report such evils of them, not as from themselves, but as from others, of whom they hear it; and that they for their parts do not believe the report to be true, neither
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will they affirm any such thing of them, but they do only declare what they have heard reported of them. But lest their design should miscarry by their mincing of the matter, they will tell you also, that they had the evil report from very good hands, honest men or women told them so, but they know no evil by them; and they do by this device also deceive such silly Souls who are willing to hear-ken to them.

8. Eighthly. These back-biting Slanderers, will insinuate into men, and gain their audience and belief of the slanders they bring to them, by commending and praising those men which they are reproaching of. They will tell them, that notwithstanding what they have wickedly reported of them to their (it may be perpetual) reproach, yet they do hope and think that they are very honest and good men, notwithstanding their miscarriages, for they are generally reputed so to be amongst honest men, and that they themselves have known them many years. This is another Conduit-pipe they make
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use of, to convey their poyson into the hearts of men against their Neighbours. Thus wicked *Saul* and *Ahab* did; And though *Saul* did confess that *David* was more righteous than himself, 1 *Sam.* 24. 17. yet *Saul* did persecute and prosecute *David*, as if he had been a great sinner. So did *Ahab*, he did acknowledg that *Micaiah* was a prophet of the Lord, 2 *Chron.* 18. yet he rendred him as odious and contemptible to *Jehosaphat* as he could. Just so do back-biting Slanders now, they will say and acknowledg that the persons whom they reproach, are good men, and yet they will cast dirt and odium upon them, and intend by their praising and commending of them, to defame and reproach them so much the more. But O ! how great and abominable is their sin in so doing; yea, how greatly is their sin aggravated thereby? What ! confess that they are good men, and yet reproach them? what, wilt thou cast dirt on the white and pure names of good men, and that when you say you do believe them so to be, you are the Monsters

sters of men? What, will you make good men, who have the Image of God, his holiness stampt upon them, look like wicked men? will you bespatter and defile those whom Christ hath washed, and make those abominable to men, whom God hath made honourable to, and for himself? will you blaze abroad their real or supposed errors, and thereby reproach both God and them, and be guiltless? No, no, your sin will find you out, and you shall not escape the righteous judgment of God; and your own Consciences and confession will one day accuse and witness against you, at the Bar of divine Justice; and your cursed Hypocrisie will then, if not before, appear and be declared before Angels and men. These men and women are like the *Pharisees and Herodians*, Mat. 22. 16, 17, 18. say they of Jesus Christ, *Master, we know that thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth; neither carest thou for any man, for thou regardest not the persons of men. Tell us therefore, is it lawfnl to give tribute to Cæsar, or not, what think-*
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est thou? Well, these were good words, and a worthy commendation; but what was their end in it? If you look into the 15. and 18th. verses, you may see that it was designed to entangle him, that so they might have, and improved, the greater occasion against him, to accuse and reproach him; hence Christ answers him, with a *why tempt ye me ye Hypocrites?* Just so do these Hypocritical back-biters deal with men, yea, with good men, and I doubt not but their reward shall be the same with the hypocritical Pharisees, unless they do timely repent in dust and ashes.

9. Ninthly. Another cunning, subtle, and hypocritical way that these back-biting Slanderers and Reproachers have, is this; they will profess and pretend that they do not intend them any hurt. They will shoot their poysoned Arrows at their good names; rob them of their precious and invaluable Jewels, and make them odious and contemptible to all men; and yet pretend, and labour to perswade men, that they do not desire or intend to

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hurt them ; just as if a man, while he is breaking of my bones, robbing and ruining me, should pretend, and tell me truly Sir, I do intend no hurt to you in what I do, I would not have you to think so, nor to judg me ever the worse man for what I have done to you. These men may be believed, and their plea and pretence received and accepted as good, and valued as the plea and pretence of these back-biters ; and it will be of as great force and validity to perswade and satisfie wise men that shall well consider it ; and stand them in stead at the last day before the Bar of Gods justice, as well as the Reproachers plea and pretence. But O ! thou back-biting Slanderer, doth not thy Conscience give thy Tongue the lie ? doth not thy Conscience tell thee that thou do'st intend to hurt him, to wound, yea, and murder his good name by thy defaming of him ; that thou do'st earnestly desire, and design to blast his Reputation, and to make him vile, or more vile than thou art thy self, in the eyes of all men ? Is it possible that a man should
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by abusing and wronging of me, seek and design my good, or to do me good by his so doing? Now, all such back-biting Slanderers do undoubtedly propound some end in what they speak; for it is essential to reasonable Creatures to do so; yea, to have their end first in their eye, as, the mark they level at in all their words and actions. Now then, seeing they cannot but design some end, and it being impossible that they should design, and intend to do a man good, whose good name they do irregularly defame and traduce; then assuredly, whatsoever they do pretend to the contrary, they do indeed design and intend his hurt, and therefore they do speak what they speak of him, that they may hurt him, and that from the gall and spleen of malice, envy, prejudice, or something else that is working within, against him; which will undoubtedly appear one day, *when the secrets of all hearts shall be opened, and every man judged according to what he hath spoken or done, against God and men, Jude 14, 15.*

10. Tenthly. Another cunning and hypocritical shift and pretence these back-biters have, is this, That they do greatly love him or them, whom they speak evil of; and that they would be ready to do them any good they can, but truly they cannot but speak of them; notwithstanding they do love them; yea, say they, we should not have spoken of him, his, or their miscarriages, if they had not loved them; but because they are dear unto them, therefore they do report of them what they do; for had they hated them, they would not have done so; but now you must know, (if you be such Fools as to believe us) that it is our love to their persons that constrains us to declare their evils to you; and we would not have you think otherwise of us: But know, O you back-biting Slanderers, that this is a lie, if the Word of God be true; which informs us, that love to persons will not suffer us either to think, or speak any evil of them, or do any evil to them, 1 Cor. 13. but that on the contrary, love will constrain us to think and speak the best

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we possibly can of them, and do them good, especially when we know they have sinned, broken their bones, and wronged their Souls, *Gal. 6. 1. Pro. 8.* last verse, for then they stand in more need of the fruits of our love, than at other times, to help them up, and restore them again; and did you indeed love them as you say you do, you would be at work else-where for them, and not where you are, against them; you would have been in your Cloffets with God for them, and have entreated the Lord for them; you would have begged the Lord to pardon them, convinced and humbled them, to have drawn them back again unto himself, and restore peace and comfort again unto them; you would have entreated the Lord to enable you to do your duty to them, and to bless your endeavours; and then you would have gone to them, laboured with them to have convinced them of their sins, and to have done all you could to have secured their good names. But you wholly neglecting to do what was your work to

have done, *Math.* 18. 15, 16. *Gal.* 6. 1, 2. *Levit.* 19. 17. and doing and speaking that which you ought not to have done of, and against them: *Tit.* 3. 2. *Jam.* 4. 11. *Levit.* 19. 16. *Exod.* 23. 1. you have thereby plainly declared that you do not love them, but really hate them; whereby your cursed hypocrisie is discovered, and your pretended love manifested to be hatred. For it is a certain truth, that true love will make a person as tender of his good name to preserve it, as of his life, whom he loves; and true love to any man will restrain him from speaking evil of him irregularly and unnecessarily.

Another subtle and cunning wile; whereby such carry on their designs against the good names of men, is this; they will pretend that they are very sorry and much afflicted in their minds, because the name and Gospel of Christ, the holy waies and people of God will be scandalized by the sins of such whom they are defaming of, if it should come abroad and be known what such have said

or done; Oh! say those Hypocrites, we tremble to think what the issue of it will be, and that while they are divulging of them, and that with additions and aggravations, endeavouring to make the real matter worser, and more formidable than indeed it is. But can any man or woman in the world believe them, unless they have put out their eies, and are willing to be deceived by them? For if they were indeed sorry, and concerned in the name and honour of Christ, his waies and people, as they pretend, would they dare to open their mouths to divulge and spread abroad that evil, which if known abroad, will reflect on Christ and his people, as they say, and pretend to be afraid of? or would they not rather do all they can (as is their duty to do) to conceal it, and obstruct the reports of it, though the matter be never so true and certain, that so the name and people of Christ may not suffer, or be reproached thereby; and although they cannot shut the mouths of others, nor by their endeavours hinder them from divulging of it, yet be sure

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they will keep their own shut, as *David* speaks, *Psal.* 39. 1. and not once make mention of it to any men (especially women) except to the sinners themselves, or to the persons that shall speak of it to them, by perswading them to be silent, and do all they can to hinder the growth and progress of it, for Christ, his people and Gospel sakes. But whereas they do endeavour to spread and divulge it, they do shew plainly that they are but Hypocrites, that they have no real regard at all to name, Gospel, waies and people of Christ; and in a word, that they do neither fear God, nor reverence men, as it is said of the unrighteous *Judg.* *Luk.* 18. 2. and that they care not how much Christ is dishonoured and blasphemed by their means, *Rom.* 2. 24. so they may be hearkened to, and proceed successfully in their diabolical work.

12. Another stratagem of these back-biters is this, they will charge such, to whom they speak evil of others, not to speak what they have heard from them to any body, no, that they must not by
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any means; they will (pretendedly at least) tie up others mouths, yea, such as they have opened, and put words and matter into to talk of, while their own mouths are as open as red hot Ovens; they may talk and speak their pleasure themselves, of whom they please, but those to whom they speak, must be silent; and muzzle their mouths, as if they had not the same liberty to speak as themselves.

But indeed this is but a pretty handsome blind, it is but a Raison for them who hear them reproach, to help them the more easily and freely to swallow their poysonous Pills withal; for they do not intend, nor desire that such should be silent, but that they should as fast as they can send it further abroad and make Merchandize of it to whom they please; only with this *proviso* that they do not declare to any, where they had these wares, nor of whom they bought them. And assuredly, whosoever is free, and doth desire to reproach any man to a few, will not stick to do so to many, if they

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have opportunity for it, and what they cannot do themselves, they will imploy and set others on work to do it for them ; and as men do by dispraising of themselves to others, endeavour, and aim at the heightning and exalting of themselves in their thoughts, so do such cursed back-biters in their defaming and subtle traducing of men ; and when they charge their hearers to be silent, and not divulge what they have heard, they do thereby intend and endeavour to have them divulge and spread it so much the more.

13. Another of their subtle and wily waies of working successfully, is this ; They will rack and squees some harmless words, actions, or carriages (of such as they have a mind to reproach) such as in their own nature, and in the necessary circumstances which attend them, are indifferent to make them sins ; putting on them a most rigid, sence and an unjust, and uncharitable interpretation, drawing sinful and wicked inferences from honest and innocent premises or matters ; and
this

this is common with them to do. For, they having a mind to raise an evil report on a person, and having watched him, to see if they could find him halting, and being disappointed therein, they will now do what they can, and make the best, or rather the worst of what they see or hear of them. They will with the Spider, extract and suck Poyson out of a wholesome hearb, and spit it out on the good names of men whom they hate, or envy, or are offended at. They are like *Zoylus*, the common Slanderer, who being asked the reason why he did reproach such and such men; *Why*, saies he, *it is because I cannot otherwise reach them to do them hurt*. So many of these back-biting Slanderers, having an earnest desire to hit and wound such, or such men, and save themselves harmless; and with *Judas*, seeking up and down for opportunity, being full of envy or wrath, and willing to ease themselves of the poyson they travel withal, and finding all other expected and desired means, and opportunities, or occasions to fail, they now rather than fail

fail, will try what they can do by drawing of inferences and consequences from what they have either seen or heard of them, and make that a sin by their Inferences, Consequences, and Conclusions, that they cannot find to be so in the Premises, and then divulge sins of their own forming, with all the ugly aggravating circumstances they can ; thus, if they by any means know or hear that they have been at any time in an infamous house, presently they conclude, that they were naught there with some body, though necessary business called them there, which was their trouble, that they were constrained to go there about their necessary occasions ; with hearts watching and abhorring any, and all such abominations as are there practiced ; yet how-ever, these back-biters take for granted that they were there about some wicked works ; never considering that good men may have lawful calls and occasions to be sometimes at such places full sore against their minds. So if they see them walking in the Company, or talking with infamous
per-

persons, this also is made matter of reproach to them; so if they are frugal and wisely, and dutifully saving, and not prodigally wasting and spending their Estates as others do; or if they are diligent in their Callings, then they are Covetous worldlings. If they be reserved, and cannot, or do not talk so freely and liberally as some do, then they are reported to be proud. If they are generous and openly free in their Hospitality, then they are condemned for prodigal, vain-glorious persons. So that let men walk never so circumspectly, these wicked Back-biters will be upon their skirts, they will fling out their dirt and dung, their scum and poyson on their good names, and stab them to their hearts, by drawing of Inferences and Conclusions from these and such like premises, wherein they shew themselves uncharitable, and malicious Enemies indeed; as the Jews Enemies did, *Ezra. 4. 16.* The Jews were rebuilding of *Jerusalem* according to their duty, and by order from *Cyrus* the King: Their Enemies take notice

tice of it, they drew this Conclusion, and sent it to the King. *We certifie the King, that if this City be builded again, and the Walls thereof set up, by this means thou shalt have no Portion on this side the River.* That is, they would Rebel against the King; so that what they could not do against them by the sword, by force and violence, they supplied and made up by slander and reproach, as our back-biting Reproachers do now.

14. These Reproachers are all for privacy, they will not have it known by no means, no not for any good, that they have spoken evil of such persons, and therefore (as was hinted before) they do lay bonds on their hearers, not to tell any body that they did say so & so of such persons. For it being one of the cursed works of darkness, they would by no means have the workers seen in the light. Now the reasons of this secrecy are first *their own guilty and accusing Consciences,* Rom. 2. 15. *they being Condemned of themselves,* Tit. 3. 11. They know that they have done very wickedly and abominably,

minably, and their Consciences fly in their faces for what they have done, and assures them that their reproaching was the product of their malice, pride, hatred and envy; that they did intend, and have accordingly hurt the men whom they have defamed. Secondly, From their fears of being detected and prosecuted as wicked hurtful persons, both to God and men. For their Consciences having already accused and condemned them as evil doers, they knowing already what they have deserved, and what punishments may be inflicted on them justly, for what they have maliciously done; they shall not be able to endure to stand to the Tryal. For though they are very free in afflicting their Neighbours good names, yet they are not free to suffer the punishment which may be justly inflicted on them for their deserts. For it is just and righteous, that they that have put others to shame, by casting reproach on them, should be put to shame themselves for their so doing. But what need of so much secrecy? for if the work be good,

good; why should it be hid? why should you be ashamed to have it known that you are the Authors of it. Surely none need ever be ashamed of their good works; for they will justify themselves, and the workers also, before all men; and you know that we should have your *good works to shine before men*, Math. 5. 16. If they be evil works in your account, why do you then so freely do them? If your Consciences condemn them as wicked, and such as you cannot abide should call you Father, why do you not repent of them, avoyd, and forsake them? why do you not speedily endeavour to undoe such as you have already done, as much as possibly you can, give satisfaction too, by making restitution of those good names you have already robbed men of, by your wicked works which you are ashamed of? If you refuse to do so, and still go on in doing your shameful works, be assured there is a day hastening upon you, wherein your shameful works shall be detected and declared, and all the wickedness of your hearts in doing of them,

to ge-

together with all your cursed and hateful ends. And thus having traced these subtle and hypocritical back-biting slanderers, and reproachers, and detected some of their wiles and methods, by which they do their works of darkness, and carry on their devillish designs against the pretious names of good men; and having shewed that men are guilty of Slandering, Reproaching, Defaming, and speaking evil of men, not only by reporting such sins or evils which they are altogether guiltless of, but also in and by reporting unduly, irregularly, and slanderously their real sins and miscarriages. All which is done,

First, When persons have no call to reveal the sins of others.

Secondly, When the Reporters do not certainly know that to be true, which they report is so.

Thirdly, When they report the real sins and miscarriages of others to such as are not at all concerned in them, neither can, nor will endeavour to convince and reform them.

Fourth-

Fourthly, When they care not who knows their sins and miscarriages, nor to whom they do reveal them.

Fifthly, When they do augment and aggravate their sins, by representing them in multiplying-glasses unto men.

Sixthly, When they report them with defaming and reproaching words.

Seventhly, When it is done with unrighteous and cruel judgments and censurings; as that the person, or persons, committing such sins, are doubtless wicked and graceless, or that they did design and intend to do worse and worse, and the like.

Eighthly, When they reveal their sins with heat and bitterness of spirit, against the persons they traduce.

Ninethly, When they do endeavour to perswade their hearers, that although they have been guilty of such sin or sins, but once or twice, yet that they do live in the trade and practice of them.

Tenthly, When they do not proceed in revealing others real and known sins, according to the rules and laws of Jesus Christ; but contrary to them. Ele-

Eleaventh, When they do design and carry on wicked ends in and by revealing the sins of men : As

First, To defame and render them odious, vile, and contemptible amongst men, to make their good names to stink abroad.

Secondly, When it is done, to ease and disgorge their hatred, envy, malice, and wrath on their good names, and to revenge some real or supposed injury.

Thirdly, When they do design to raise their own esteem and reputations on the ruine of others, whom they do traduce ; and by putting out their light, do hope and expect their own will shine the more gloriously.

Fourthly, When designed to break and separate love and friendship, between Friends, Neighbours and Relations ; so that in and by reporting, and revealing of real sins and miscarriages of others, we are really guilty of the foul sin of slandering, or blaspheming. Now I shall proceed to the opening and clearing of the fourth head, which follows.

CHAP.

CHAP. IV.

The greatness, and hainousness of the Sin of Reproaching and defaming the good names of men, is prov'd and demonstrated at large.

THat which I have next to do, is to open and manifest the hainous, horrid, and hurtful nature of the sin of slandering, defaming, and reproaching; or the raising, upholding, or receiving and entertaining an evil report of others. Now I shall first shew that it is a sin; and secondly, that it is a very great and grievous sin. First, That it is a sin, is manifest in the 9th. Commandement, *Exod. 20. 16. Thou shalt not bear false Witness against thy Neighbour.*

The whole scope and meaning of this Commandement is, to forbid, and keep
men

men from hurting, or any way, by any means wronging or abusing one anothers good names; and to bid and injoyne them to do all they can to preserve and secure one anothers good names for, and to them. But now by speaking evil one of another, raising and upholding, receiving and entertaining evil reports of, and against one another; we do really break and transgress this Law, and therefore we do sin against God, men, and our own Souls, *Exod. 23. 1. Thou shalt not raise or receive a false report, Psal. 34. 13. Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile, Jam. 4. 11. speak not evil one of, or against another (Brethren:) he that speaketh evil of his Brother, and judgeth his Brother, speaketh evil of the Law, and judgeth the Law, 1 pet. 3. 10, 11. For he that will love life, and see good dayes, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips from, or that they speak no guile. Let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace and ensue it, Tit. 3. 2. That they speak evil of no man, Eph. 4. 31. Let all bitterness,*
and

and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you.

Secondly : There are two other Witnesses giving in their testimony, besides the Scriptures to manifest the truth ; the First is the general vote of all men, who do all unanimously condemn it in general, Heathens as well as men called Christians, as I may manifest afterward. Secondly, The Consciences of the practitioners of this Sin : I say their Consciences, though miserably and wofully corrupted and debauched, do arraign, accuse and condemn them, and cry out shame against them, for what they do in this matter, which appears, First, by their earnest desire, manifested to such, to whom they declare their will and pleasure of others ; that they do by no means discover or make known that they had such evil reports from their mouths ; and if it happen that they do declare that they had them from their mouths, Oh ! how are they offended at it, and take it as if they had done them much wrong and injury ; and they will ever after account
them

them their Enemies, and be ready to acquaint them with some evil report or other, if they can. Now what reason is there why they should be so shy of their names, and afraid to have themselves known to be the Authors or Fomentors of evil reports, but that their Consciences (as was said) do arraign and condemn them of great wickedness; and that they have sinned against God and men by what they have reported. Secondly, This further appears by their evasions and put offs, when the persons wronged by their wicked tongues, do reprove them for what they have spoken; they will not own or acknowledg the fact, if possible they can evade it: But if it be so plainly proved to their faces, as that they cannot deny it, then they will mince it, and tell them it is true, they did say some such thing of them, but they did not intend them any hurt, or wish them any wrong; and that they did not speak so of them from malice or hatred, for they bear them no ill will; or that they did not mean by what they reported, or said,

as

as such and such persons were pleased to understand and take it ; that they were not the first Authors of it, but some body told them so ; that they do not believe the report to be true, and that they are sorry there should be so much stir about it, and that they are so much offended at it, and the like. By all which, it is evident, that they *are Condemned of themselves*, Tit. 3. 11. and that the guilt of the sin layes them under shame and confusion, and that they do know they have done wickedly and abominably.

But Secondly, I shall, the Lord assisting, manifest the hainousness and horridness of this sin of reproaching and defaming the good names of men, and evidence the hurtful and prodigious nature and issues of it ; and although I cannot fathom the bottom, nor reach the height, nor discern the breadth and length of it, yet I shall go as far as I can to detect and lay open this Monster, this Villanous and destroying Sin ; that all, who please, may see it, and flee it, avoyd and refrain it, loath and abhor it, and keep at a distance
from

from it ; and never have any Communion with it ; for be you assured of it, that it is a God-provoking, and a Soul-damning Sin ; it will make all the practitioners of it, most abominable and loathsome to God and men. It is a sin that is exceeding sinful, and let not the commonness of it, nor because it is frequently practised by Professors of the Gospel and holiness, cause thee to think otherwise, or better of it then it will be declared to be ; *Synesius* speaking of this sin, saith, *Quoniam nulli ceque mores deo execrabiles sunt, ac famigerratoris, qui ex obscuro vulnus infligit, ignavissimus enim quum sit maxima infert mala* ; because no courses are so execrable to God, as the Tale-bearers, who woundeth in secret, for being a fellow most false-hearted, most cowardly base, great are the evils which he causeth. Now as there are some sins bigger, and in some sence, especially with respect to men, greater, and more notorious than others ; so I doubt not but (through grace) to make it appear, that this sin is one of the vilest and most pernicious sins

in the world. I know that *Omne peccatum suum habet excellentiam*, every sin hath some peculiar vileness, wherein it may be said to excel other; and doubtless if any sins among their fellows, may be branded with a blacker mark than others, of ignominy this is one of them; which I shall now demonstrate and prove.

First: That this sin is very hainous, and exceeding sinful, appears from the names & appellations the Scripture gives it, and the actors of it.

First, They are called, or named back-biters, and the sin, back-biting; and this name is given them from the manner of their procedures, against the good names and reputations of men, as well as from the matter or work it self; and that is because they do bite and sting, stab and wound men secretly, or behind their backs, whereby they do devour men, as the Apostle *Paul* tells us, *Gal. 5. 15. But if (saies he) ye bite and devour one another, take heed ye be not consumed one of another*, *Rom. 1. 30.* they are ranckt

amongst the worst of sins, and sinners, even such as God had given up to judicial hardness and impenitency in sinning, 24. 28, 29. verses, and the 5th. verse of the second Chapter, compared (κατάλα-
 λῆ) is his name given him by the spirit of God, and I do assure you it is a most odious and ignominious one; for he is a fordid, base Coward, who dares not look the person whom he reproacheth in the face, but hides his head in the dark, though he will speak openly, but so as that the reproached shall not know it, until he hath spit his Venom far and near on him, like the Serpent. This *Oblonguitor* is a most subtle and wily worker; for he hath been taught of the Devil; the Devil hath tutored him in the cursed art of back-biting. This was one of the *Corinthians* sins, which did so much afflict and trouble the spirit of blessed *Paul*, 2 *Cor.* 12. 20. For I fear lest there be καταλαλῆαι, and that when I come, my God will humble me among you, and that I shall bewail many which have sinned already. Blessed *Paul* saw such wickedness, and

God-provoking evil in this sin, as to cause great sorrow of heart in him, though committed by others, and not by himself; the Scripture doth often elsewhere mention this sin with a black mark of ignominy, as *Psal. 15. 3. Prov. 25. 23.*

Secondly : There is another name given them in Scripture, much like the other, and that is *Ψιθυιστής, Susurro*, *Rom. 1. 30.* that is, a Whisperer. This whispering Reproacher, is so near of kin to the aforesaid Back-biter, as that they are Brethren in the same Iniquity; Children of the same Father, and acted, and carryed on by the same spirit; and designing the same ends, namely, to rob and spoyle good men of their good names, and reputations among men; and thereby break and hinder that friendship and communion that should be, or had been among Neighbours, Friends, and Relations. There is only this difference in the way and manner of their procedures in their cursed work, namely, that the whisperer doth his work a little more secretly than

than the back-biter. Yet so, as that both do agree in this, to do all they can to hide themselves and their sins from such as they do rob and spoyl of their good names. The whisperer doth his work somewhat more subtilly and closely than the back-biter doth. The whisperer doth like a Serpent, whiz and hiss out his poyson, by laying his mouth a little closer to the ears of his hearers, then doth the back-biter; his speaking is called *ψιθυρισμός, Susurras*, Whispering, 2 Cor. 12. 20. because he acts and proceeds more closely, and secretly. But the whisperer slanders, defames, and reproacheth men; & so doth the back-biter also. The whisperer endeavours to *separate friendship*, Prov. 16. 28. by raising or upholding an evil report of men, & so doth the Back-biter also; and in a word, they do both aim at, and intend to wrong and hurt the good names of men, and they are both alike, odious and abominable to God and men, as appears by the spirit, his putting them both on the black role, *Rom. 1. 30. Among the very scum of the earth.* They are

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such as speak each of them with three tongues (*loqui lingua tertia*) because like a Serpent he stingeth thee at once. First, himself. Secondly, Him to whom he makes the evil report. Thirdly, He of whom he makes the evil report. And the same man or woman, who acts more exactly as a whisperer in one place, and to one person, will act in another place, and to another person, exactly as a back-biter; so that their sin and work is the same, though sometimes they do a little differ in the manner of doing it.

Thirdly, Another name given them in Scripture, is, *δαιμόνιον*, Devil, 1 Tim. 3. 11. They have the Devils name upon them; they are called by his name, and well they may; For

First, They do in their defaming and reproaching, act by, and from him; by his instigation and Counsel.

Secondly, They do the same work the Devil doth, or would do, had he a mouth and tongue to speak as they have, but wanting such instruments for the work as they have to defame and reproach with.

withal, he is pleased to imploy in his work such as have them : He made use of the Serpent, that went upon his belly, to accuse and slander God to *Eve*, Gen. 3. but now he makes use of such as go upon their Legs, and drudg up and down for him as his Slaves, or Servants. Hence our Saviour tells us, *Joh. 8. 44.* that men do the *Lusts of their Father the Devil*. The meaning is, that they do the works which he stirs them up, and prompts them to do, and such as the Devil doth exercise and imploy himself about. It is true, he can immediatly as a Spirit slander and accuse us to God, as he did *Joh* ; and in the 12th. of the *Rev. 9, 10.* ver. *he is called the Accuser of the Brethren*, but not immediatly to men, but to God, or before God, saith the Text. For wanting a bodily tongue, he cannot do it to men ; and therefore he makes use of the tongues of men and women to do this devillish work withal.

Thirdly, As they do the Devils works by back-biting, and deforming, so they design and carry on the Devils ends. By

all which, and upon these and the like accounts, they are called (and that rightly and worthily) Devils, but I shall speak more fully to this afterward.

Fourthly, *Defamers* and *Reproachers* are called in Scripture by the odious name of *Railers*; he that raiseth an evil report, or upholds, or spreads it abroad, is called *λοιδόρος*, a *Railer*, 1 Cor. 5. 11. Now Railers are marked out in Scripture, as the vilest and the worst of men; they are opprobrious & contumelious speakers of men; belching out evil, and casting out dirt and dung on the good names of men. A Railer (saith a Learned man) is an evil speaker, which upbraideth others with their true faults in a reproachful manner. This was the sin that made *Rabshakeh* so abominable to the Jews, 2 King. 18. 19, 28. compared with 2 Chron. 32. 17, 18. and *Nabal* to David, and his friends, 1 Sam. 25. 14. and *Shimei* to David, and his Army, 2 Sam. 16. 'Tis true, these men did rail openly to the faces of men whom they did reproach; they did as it were fly on them with opprobrious

probrious words, wherein they did very wickedly ; but is the back-biting or whispering Railer one tittle better than the open ? no, in no wise. For, as was shewed before, the open Railer and defamer, gives men opportunity to debate the matter with him, and to clear himself to them that hear him railed at ; but the back-biting Railer deprives a man of such an opportunity, though he doth the same ; yea, more mischief to him, then the open Railer to his face doth.

Fifthly, Such as raise, uphold, or entertain evil reports of others, are called in Scripture *false-accusers*, 2 Tim. 3. 3. the word in Greek is *Ψευδομαρτυροι*, Devils ; which the Latine renders *Calumniatores*, & *Criminatores*. And undoubtedly, men may be false-accusers of others, when they do report the real faults of others ; as by their adding unto what is real, making them more or bigger than they are, or by aggravating them, beyond what they will bear. So by many other waies and means of their own devising, designed to render them odious to men.

Sixthly, They are called by that reproachful name, *Reproachers* ; for as their work is to reproach other mens good names, so their sinful work lays them under the odious names of Reproachers. For as *Solomon* saith, *Prov.* 23. 7. *As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he ;* So I may say, as a man reproacheth others, so is he. He reproacheth others, and makes them vile ; so he reproacheth himself, and makes himself vile ; and while he designs to lay others under reproach by his evil reports , he makes himself a reproach, and incurs the odious name of a Reproacher, by the just judgment of God upon him, *Neh.* 4. 4. *Psal.* 89. 41. *Prov.* 14. 34. *Prov.* 18. 3. For as he that follows Drunkenness, is rightly named a Drunkard ; and he that follows Whoredome, is rightly named a Whoremonger ; so is he that reproacheth others, rightly named a Reproacher : and this reproach shall hardly ever be wiped away, *Prov.* 6.

Seventhly, They are named, or called, *Revilers* ; which is indeed a vile name, but

but their names are (as was said) according to their works. He that speaks evil of others, is a vile person; a Reviler is set in among men who are very vile indeed, 1 Cor. 6. 10. the word that is here rendred Reviler, is the same in the original, that in the 1 Cor. 5. 11. is rendred, Railer. It is *λοιδόρος*. he is put among, and accounted one of the prophane and debauched crue of Idolaters, Adulterers, Sodomites, Thieves, and Drunkards, *which shall not inherit the Kingdom of God.* Now a Reviler is one, who speaks evilly and dishonourably of others, tauntingly and reproachfully, disdainfully and villifyingly of persons better than himself, *Math. 5. 11. 1 Cor. 4. 12. Exod. 22. 28.* and that before their faces, and behind their back. As now to instance, to say, or report, that such a man or woman is a Thief, a Defrauder, a Drunkard, or an unclean person; or that he or she is a Fool, or a silly person, such do by their so doing, revile them, *Math. 5. 22. whosoever shall say to his Brother Racha, or Fool, shall be in danger of the Councel, and Hell fire.*

Eighth.

Eighthly, They are named, or called, *Defamers*; for they who defame others, are justly named Defamers for their so doing; for (as was said) their work gives them their name, or they have their names from their work. Now to defame a man, is to take away, or deprive him of his good fame and reputation amongst men, and thereby rendring him despicable and of no account, 1 Cor. 4. 13. Jer. 20. 10.

Ninethly, They are named, or called, *Blasphemers*; for by their evil speaking, or speaking evil of others to their dishonour, shame, and disgrace, they do blaspheme them. Many think that there is no blasphemy but against God, his Names, Attributes, Words, Ordinances, Work, and Providences; but they are mistaken; for one man may commit blasphemy against another, and it is usual for men so to do, yea and professors of the Gospel too, Rom. 3. 8. So St. Paul tells us, that he was slanderously reported of; so it is read in our Bibles, but in the Original, it is βλασφημοῦμεθα, Blasphe-

phemously ; and such as did so report of him, were blasphemers ; and so are all such now, as do defame and reproach men ; especially if such as they do defame and reproach, be the peculiar people of God. And I do appeal to any man or woman, who read these lines, if it be not a vile and cursed name ; and if all such as blaspheme and dishonour others, are not properly and rightly so called. This word is diversly translated, as in 1 Cor. 4. 13. *it is defamed*, because a defamer is a blasphemer ; but the Greek word is βλασφημοῦμενοι. In the 1 Cor. 10. 30. βλασφημεῖν, is rendered *evil spoken of* ; so that he who speaks evil of another, blasphemes him. Oh ! take heed and beware of speaking evil of others, if you would not be marked with the black name of blasphemers, and not suffer their condemnation and punishment.

Tenthly, They are named, and called *Slanders* ; for so they are, whither they raise and spread a false report to the reproach of a man, or whether they do slanderously speak of, and spread abroad
the

the real evils of him : so such are called,
 1 *Tim.* 3. 11. as the word is there trans-
 lated, so in the 2 *Sam.* 19. 27. *Psal.*
 101. 5.

Eleventhly, They are named, or call-
 ed *Make-bates*, 2 *Tim.* 3. 3. as you may
 see there in the margin of your Bibles ;
 so in the 2 *Tit.* 3. And indeed such as de-
 fame, and raise, or spread evil reports of
 others, are the only *Make-bates* in the
 world : They are the men or women
 who raise and make strife and contention,
 brawling and discord among Brethren,
 Relations, and Neighbours, and there-
 fore they are abominable and hateful to
 God, *Prov.* 6. 16, 17, 18, 19. But more
 of this anon.

Twelfthly, They are named, and call-
 ed *Tale-bearers*, from their going up
 and down to hear and tell tales ; which is
 a most filthy, loathsome practice ; yet
 such as defamers do practice and delight
 in, though God hath expressly forbidden
 it, *Levit.* 19. 16. *Thou shalt not go up
 and down as a Tale bearer among thy peo-
 ple.* This vile generation of men are of-
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ten spoken of, and condemned in the book of the Proverbs, *chap. 11. 13. Pro. 20. 19. Pro. 26. 20, 22.* The Scripture speaks of them, as a most base, pestilent, and pernicious generation of men and women; and compares them to Pedlars, who go up and down to get, and vend their Pedlary Wares. But intending to speak far more of them afterwards; I shall forbear to do so now.

I might have enumerated many other of their vile names, which God himself gives them; as Peace-breakers, Filthy persons, Calumniators, Detractors, Evil-speakers, Tatlers; but, I shall have occasion to meet them again in another place, with others as bad; therefore let them suffice at present. Now as Lyons, Wolves, Serpents, Toades, Adders, and the like, have their names from their hateful natures, and hurtful practices. And as Drunkards, Thieves, Idolaters, and Adulterers, and the like, have their names from their hateful natures, and wicked practices; so have defaming back-biters, their odious and hateful names from their
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vile and abominable natures and practices. And put all the fore-named venomous Beasts together in one, and he cannot be so pernicious and hurtful unto men, as one defaming and reproaching tongue is. Now what should be the reasons why the holy God should give this sin, and sort of sinners, so many, horrid, odious, cursed, loathsome, hateful, and abominable names; But to shew and convince all men, that the sin of speaking evil of others, or of one another, is an exceeding great and hainous sin, and the persons committing it, exceeding great and hainous sinners; to shew and convince all men that this sin is most vile and hateful to God; dangerous and hurtful to men, and to their own Souls. And it is observable, that such persons who labour most by their poysonous foul tongues, to make, and represent other men vile, abominable, and hateful to men, should thereby make and render themselves to God and men, the most vile and contemptible of all men. The consideration of which should make them fear and tremble.

But

But while I am speaking of this matter, I would earnestly desire the Reader to search and try, and seriously to ask himself the question, if this be not thy sin; thy often repeated and reiterated sin; thy unrepented sin? If so, then know, that thou art under these and the like odious, and abominable names which God himself hath given and put upon thee; and as they are most hateful and abominable, so they are set on thee by the Lord, to declare thereby his hatred of thee and thy sin, and to shew thee that both thy self, and sin, are exceeding hateful unto him, which thou mayest do well to consider and lay to heart before it be too late; And beg the Lord to open thine eyes, that thou mayest see, and be thoroughly convinced of what thou hast done; and that he will be pleased to give thee pardon and repentance unto life.

2. The second thing propounded to be opened, was to shew and lay open the root and fountain of this sinful sin; this God-provoking, and Soul-damning sin, of raising, upholding, receiving, and entertaining-

certaining of evil reports against, or
 speaking evil of one another, or defaming
 and reproaching. Now although there
 is properly but one root and fountain of
 all enormities, namely, an evil wicked
 heart, out of which proceeds all sinful
 words and deeds, *Math. 15. 18, 19. For
 out of the heart proceeds Evil thoughts,
 Murders, Adulteries, Fornications, Thefts,
 False-witness, Blasphemies.* But yet there
 are many roots, and springs of sins in the
 heart, which produce and bring forth
 many sins. Many corrupt streams flow
 from these poysonous springs; and ma-
 ny wild branches, and cursed apples of
Sodom do grow and spring from these e-
 vil roots. There are some Mother-Lusts
 habituated in the heart, which are exceed-
 ing fruitful, from which proceeds many
 filthy brats: And as the root is, so is the
 fruit: As is the Fountain, so are the
 streams: As is the Mother, so is her
 Daughter. A corrupt and evil Tree, can-
 not but bring forth evil fruit. A Lyon
 will produce and bring forth a Lyon.
 An Adder will bring forth an Adder. A

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Serpent will bring forth a Serpent. A Swine will bring forth a Swine ; and a Dog will bring forth a Dog. So evil and wicked Lusts within , will produce and bring forth many evil and wicked fruits in word and deed ; whereof this is one, to speak evil, and receive evil reports of men, whereby they are wronged, and hurt in their good names and reputations.

1. Now, the first root, or spring which I shall name, is, *Pride*. The prevalency and over-flowing of cursed *Pride*. *Pride* is a big-bellied Lust, it is exceeding fruitful, and like *Jordan*, continually overflowing all its banks. It brings forth a hundred fold, and among other vile and filthy fruits it bears, this is one, namely, Defamations and Slanders, which is a fruit far more loathsome and abominable than the *Apples of Sodom*, more pernicious and hurtful than the poyson of *Asps*, Rom. 3. 13. It is full of deadly poyson ; wherever it fall and wounds , it is incurable, *Jam.* 3. 8. As it is said of *Joseph*, the Iron entred into his
Soul,

Soul, or his Soul came into Iron ; so it may be said of such who have received the fruit of a back-biting and defaming tongue ; it is entred into his Soul, he is held fast in the iron chain of it , he hath gotten a deadly and an incurable wound thereby. And as Pride was the root and cause that brought the Devil, Adam, and Eve under sins reproach, or the reproach of sin ; so Pride in mens hearts puts them upon the cursed work of defaming and reproaching one another, Psal. 119. 51. 69. ver. The Proud have had me greatly in derision, The Proud have forged a lie against me, Psal. 12. 2, 3, 4. Psal. 86. 14. Psal. 123. 4. Who is it that soweth discord amongst you ? It is a proud person, Prov. 6. 16. 19. Prov. 21. 23, 24. So the proud men slandered and defamed blessed Jeremiah, chap. 43. 1, 2, 3. so in 1 Sam. 2, 3. compared with the 6. 14. verses of the first Chapt. Psal. 31. 18. Psal. 10. 2, 4, 5, 7. Psal. 36. 3, 4. 11, ver. compared. Now as the Scriptures do abundantly confirm and establish this truth, so we have experience likewise fur-

further confirming it : For, we do find by observing and considering of persons and practices, that evil speakers, or defamers, and villifiers of others, are exceeding proud men and women ; such as have high and haughty carriages, looks, and speakings ; such as do manifest in almost all their words, deportments, and walkings, that their hearts are full of pride and haughtiness. You shall never see (excepting under some violent temptation) any humble, serious person imploying himself in this cursed and diabolical work. You shall never hear such persons open their mouths to back bite and defame others ; especially if they are reputed to be good men : no ; for they know themselves to be vile, and that they are as bad as the worst of men by nature, *Rom. 3. 23.* That they stand in as much need of pardoning, and healing grace themselves, as any men upon earth do, and that if they are in any thing better, or not so bad as others, it is not of themselves, but the gift and free grace of God to them : **Oh ! say they, who, and what hath made**

us to differ from the most prophane and debauched persons, who wallow in wickedness, and from hypocrites? who is it, and what is it that hath preserved and secured my feet from falling, as others have done? Is it not the God of Grace, and the grace of God? *1 Cor. 4. 7. 1 Pet. 1. 5. Eph. 2. 8. Jude 24.* And do we not stand in need of his spirit and grace continually, to guard and keep us from sinning, as others have done? Are we not as liable and subject to temptations, as they are, on whom they have prevailed; and if we had been tempted as they were, and God had left us to, and in the temptation as he hath left them, might we not, yea, should we not have sinned as they have done? *Gal. 6. 1.* Have we not as many Lusts in our hearts as they? and are they not as ready to close in with temptations, and to break forth into words and deeds, as others who have so foully sinned? yea, are we not guilty of as great, as God-provoking and Soul-damning sins in the sight of God, as such and such men are in the sight of men? And shall we think
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or speak vilely and reproachfully of them who have sinned? Oh! God forbid! God forbid! especially seeing God hath forbidden, and straightly charged us not to do so. Yea, say such meek and humble hearts, if God had not forbidden us to reproach and defame others, by speaking of, or reporting the sins and miscarriages they are guilty of, whereby they may be defamed and reproached; yet the consideration of our selves, what we are in, and of our selves; what iniquities we are guilty of before God; what vile and abominable hearts we have; how liable to commit the foulest sins; how apt to be tempted, and to close in with temptations; how weak and impotent we are of our selves, and what deceitful hearts we have; how we do stand in need of daily pardoning, healing, and preserving grace from God, yea, and of pity, and compassion from men; we could not, we should not dare to open our mouths against our Neighbours, or Brethren, who have sinned, and thereby add affliction to their bands, especially if they were good men. But

But now on the other hand, proud persons will do all they can to cast dirt on the good names of men, especially Religious good men; they will not spare their invenomed Arrows, but freely shoot them to mischief, and hurt mens good names and reputations. Proud persons do swell with pride against others, as Toads do with poyson; and it is an ease to their stomachs, to spit out some of it on the good names of such whom they disdain, and think vily of. And because they cannot (as *Zoylus* the Slanderer said) *otherwise vent themselves to hurt and mischief them, they will do as* *Campion* the Jesuit advised; *Fortiter calumniare aliquid habebit*: reproach valiantly, somewhat will stick: So they hope they shall not fail to lay them under some *odium* and shame.

Now, as humble and serious men are of Lamb-like spirits and practices, meek and harmless; so on the other side, proud men are of Lyon-like spirits and practices. And as a Lyon from his proud and cruel nature, cares not what hurt and mischief he doth, nor who he devours; so proud
men

men care not whose good names they do murder and devour; let them be innocent or nocent, let them be good or bad, let them be high or low, superiours, equals, or inferiours, Brethren, or strangers; it is all one to them; they will down with them to the ground, without any pittty or compassion, *Psal.* 10. 4, 10. and *St. Paul* tells us in *1 Tim.* 6. 4; that railings proceed from pride. Proud persons are so good, righteous, excellent, wise, honourable, and deserving in their own eies and account; and others are so vile, base and unworthy, as that they are the objects of their scorn and contempt, as *David* complains, *Psal.* 123 4. And if they see such objects of their contempt respected, and honoured by others, they will do all they can to render them vile and contemptible, that so they may be cast out of the hearts and fellowship of men. Pride in men, is like that filthy weed the naturalists speaks of, which will not suffer any good Corn, or plant, to grow near it. Most men (especially good men) do stand in their light, and lie in

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their way, especially such as have some achievements, which themselves want. They think so well of themselves, and so vily of others, as that they will not endure they should have, or carry away any honour or respect; and in case they do, these proud *Goliaths* will not fail to dirt, and daub them, to vilifie and debase them, and to load them with infamy and reproach, until they have made them look like Bedlams, that so they may be hated and despised, and not respected or regarded. They scorn and disdain them, as if they were some venemous beasts, or evil Ghosts, and will pursue them with much heat and indignation, until they have satisfied their Lusts upon their good names and reputations. But their fury is hottest against such as they think do not love and honour them; or that rebukes and reproves them for their pride. *Solomon* tells us, in *Prov. 9 7*. That he that reproveth a Scornor, getteth to himself shame; and he that rebuketh a wicked man, getteth himself a blot: and verse the 8th. Reprove not a Scornor, lest he hate thee.

So

So if he see or think that anothers honour and fame doth any whit diminish his, then will he pursue him with rage and spite, to make them hateful and dishonourable. See some instances, *1 Sam.* 18, 6. to the 14th. *verse*, *David* had a little deserved honour, ascribed to him by the women of *Israel* in their dances, when he had wrought a great work and salvation for *Israel*. Proud *Saul* hears it, and presently swells against poor *David*, and labours to make him vile and miserable, as you may read at large in that and other Chapters of the *first book of Samuel*. So proud *Goliath* in the confidence he had of his own worth and excellency, is said to disdain *David*, and he speaks villifyingly and contemptibly to, and of *David*, *1 Sam.* 17. 41, 42, 43, 44. So also did *Nabal*, *1 Sam.* 25, 10, 11. *Who is David, and who is the Son of Jesse?* which were dis-daining and villifying expressions; as much as to say, *David* is a base inconsiderable Fellow, not worthy to be minded or regarded; and shall I take such notice of such a despicable

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wretch as *David*, so as to send him a piece of bread. So proud *Haman* dealt with, and carried himself to *Mordicai*, and the Jews, *Ester* 3. 1, 2, 3. 5, 6, 7, 8. he scorned *Mordicai*, and debased him, and the rest of the Jews, and raised an evil report of them, and sought their ruine, *verse* 8, 9. and all because *Mordecai* gave him not that reverence which his proud heart expected, or thought he deserved. So *Paul*, his adversaries did to him, *Acts* 17. 18. *What will this Babler say*; this pittiful, ignorant fellow, say; this contemptuous expression was an evident fruit of their pride and high thoughts of themselves, base and unworthy thoughts of worthy *Paul*. So did the proud men to blessed *Jeremy*, chap. 43. 2. they raised an evil report of him, which proceeded from the pride of their hearts. And lastly, so did the proud Pharisees deal with *Jesus Christ*, the Lord of glory; they did all they could to render him odious to the Jews, that so they might not own him, and honour him; that so they might not believe his words, nor shew him any respect

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spect, which designs they carried on by vilifying and undervaluing him, and by reproaching and defaming him, *Mark. 6. 3. 5, Math. 12. 24. Math. 9. 3.* Now as proud men dealt with Christ and his Servants in the Scripture, so do proud men deal with good men now; as sad experience shews.

Secondly, As pride is one root and spring of defaming and evil-speaking, so hatred is another; I say hatred; for it is well known that hatred, and (as we say) ill-will, will never speak well of the person hated, no, in no wise. Such will think, imagine, construe, and speak the worst they can of all the words, carriages, and actions of those whom they hate: hatred is a passion directly opposite and contrary to Love. Now as love thinks, imagines, construes, and speaks the best of the carriages, words, and actions of those whom they love, *1 Cor. 13. 5, 7. Rom. 13. 10.* so on the other side, hatred will make men construe, and speak all things in the most rigid and barbarous sense. Yea, as love hath a faculty to

turn brass into gold, and iron into silver ; so hatred hath a faculty to turn gold into brass, and silver into iron. Let the hated speak never so well, and carry himself never so peaceably, kindly, and affably towards the person hating, all will be construed, and represented to be but hypocrisie. If he carry himself chearfully and comfortably, the hater will confirm it to be lightness and frothiness. Let the hated be free and liberal, and it will be construed to be ostentation. Let him be moderatly frugal, and dutifully saving, and it will be construed Covetousness. Let him be serious and sparing of his words, and it will be construed to be his pride. Let him be innocently familiar with his friends, it will be construed Lustfulness and wantonness. Let him but caution, instruct, and mildly reprove, it will be construed harshness and cruelty. Thus it is where a Wife hates her Husband, or the Husband the Wife, as sad and woful experience shews. And so it is among Brethren, Friends, and Neighbours.

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Now as love will earnestly seek and endeavour to preserve the honour and reputation of persons, and to do them all the good they may; so on the other hand, hatred seeks and endeavours to take from, and rob persons of their due honour and reputations, and to spoyle them of all enjoyments, as thinking them unworthy of them. This was one of the cursed fruits of *Sauk*, his pride, and hatred of *David*. Of the false Teachers, pride and hatred of *Paul*. Of the Jews pride, and hatred of Christ, *Joh. 15. 25.* and of *David*; his Enemies pride and hatred caused them to defame and reproach him, *Psal. 109. 2, 3, 4, 17, 20, 25.* Evil hatred will not rest or be quiet; it burns in the heart like fire, and be studious of revenge, *Ezek 25. 15.* and vent its self it will, and catch hold of what it can, of the object hated. If it cannot reach the soul, it will if possible reach the body; if not the life, estate, or liberty, then it will fasten on, and burn their good names with their fiery tongues, *Prov. 26. 23, 24. Prov. 16. 27.* *David* complains

of it to God, in the 9th. *Psal. 13. verse,*
Consider the trouble which I suffer of them
that hate me : so also in *Psal. 41. 5, 6, 7.*
Mine Enemies speak evil of me ; they ga-
ther iniquity, and when they go abroad, they
tell it. But why do they do so, or from
 whence is it? saith he, *verse 7. They*
hate me. Why do they whisper together,
 against *David*, speak evil of him, and
 devise his hurt? why? It was because
 they hated him, saies the Text. Why do
 any men or women now defame, whisper
 against, back-bite, and slander their Re-
 lations, Friends, or Neighbours; carry
 about tales of them to their reproach?
 why? It is because their proud hearts do
 hate them, with bitter and cruel hatred.
 For otherwise it would be impossible for
 them to do so wickedly, especially against
 their near Relations and Friends. But
 hatred will make the hated as vile, base,
 and odious as possible, that so the haters
 may have some colour and pretence for
 their hating of them, and provoke and
 excite others thereby to hate them like-
 wise, as such vile objects as they have re-
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presented them to be. Hatred travelleth with mischief towards the hated. *Hamans* hated *Mordecai* and the Jews, and he was never quiet until he had sealed and established his mischievous designs against them. *Esther*, 3. To destroy *Mordecai* and all the Jews. *Hamans* proud hatred could not confirm its self to the immediate object of his hatred; I mean *Mordecai*, but it must extend its self to all the Jews; so true is that maxime which we have from *Aristotle*, saith he, hatred is alwaies *ἡμῶς τὰ ἅπαντα*, against the whole kind of its object. Yea, this hatred will make men rejoyce at their devouring the good names of the hated, *Jer.* 11. 15. For as love will make a man rejoyce in doing good to the object of his love, so hatred will make a man rejoyce in doing mischief to him he hates. As it is reported, that when *Thales* was asked, how a man might be chearful and bear up in afflictions? answered, if he can see his Enemies in worse case than himself. The Poet hath given us the Character of such kind of men :

*Pectora felle virent, lingua est suffusa
veneno :*

*Risus abest, nisi quem visi fecere do-
lores.*

Their Breasts with Gall, their Tongues
with Venom flow :

They laugh not, till they see men brought
to woe.

So that all such as are defamers and re-
proachers, such as back-bite, and speak
evil of men, may be, and are justly called
proud haters of men; yea, and without
doubt of God also, whatever their pro-
fession be, *Prov. 21. 24. Proud and
haughty scorner is his name, who dealeth in
proud wrath, saies Solomon, or rather the
spirit of God.*

Now is there any man in the world,
who shall rightly and impartially consi-
der and weigh the roots of this wicked-
ness without envy or prejudice, but will
easily conclude that whatsoever such per-
sons profess to the contrary, yet they are
a vile generation of men and women, and
such

such as ought not to be believed nor regarded, but to be shuned and avoyded, and not at all to be believed and hearken-
 ed unto in their evil reports, but to be
 looked on with indignation and sharp re-
 proofs! *Prov. 25. 23. As the North wind*
driveth away rain, so doth an angry coun-
tenance, a back-biteing tongue. Will any
 wise man give heed, hearken to, believe,
 or countenance pride and hatred? If not,
 why will they give heed, hearken unto,
 believe or countenance the fruits and ex-
 pressions of them? For, can there any
 good fruits spring from such roots of bit-
 terness, *Heb. 12.* or any good water flow
 from such filthy loathsome Fountains? *Jam. 3.*
 Ought you not to consider that
 such persons as do design and hate men,
 will not stick to speak falsely of them,
 with a design to hurt and injure them?
 Is not hatred full of gall and wormwood,
 of wrath and burning zeal? Is it not full
 of venome and bitterness; of restless
 cruelty, and ruining designs against the
 objects of their hatred? Oh! that men
 did but seriously weigh these things, and
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consider from whence they proceed, then assuredly they would abhor to give any countenance to such tongues, or credit what they assert and affirm, but would rather rebuke them sharply, and declare their indignation against such practices and practicers.

Thirdly, As this wickedness springs and flows from the roots and fountain of pride and hatred, so also from malice: I say malice; and assuredly this is another of the cursed roots and corrupt fountains of detracting, and defaming; of backbiting and reproaching; and of robbing men of their good names and reputations, *Col. 3. 8.* Malice is inveterate anger, and an evil affection of the heart, which properly desireth the hurt of our Neighbour, and rejoyceth in his falling into sin or affliction, and the men in whom it prevails, are called malicious men, and their reproaching words, malicious words, *Jas. 3. Epistle, 10th. verse,* shews what root they spring from. This sin lies deeply rooted in the hearts of men, and most-ly vented against the good, names, credit, honour

honour and reputations of men. This wickedness quickly grows up into enmity and irreconcilableness, once in, and never out ; so that a man was as good meet a bare robbed of her whelps, as a man full of malice. It will rend and tear like a fierce Lyon, and not spare, nor be restrained. It will admit of no parly or debate, nor suffer pity to be shewed to a man in distress. It is full of venemous poyson, neither will it be satisfied without the ruine and destruction of a man, that it is set against. And therefore, when it cannot reach to murder, and take away his life, it will not fail to do all it can, though in the dark, to murder a mans good name, and to give him a mortal wound in his reputation: like the Panther, who (as it is said) will tear a mans picture if he cannot come at the man himself to tear him. The Apostle *James* tells us, *that wars and fightings comes from the Lusts of men*, Jam. 4. 1, 2, and I am sure that evil speakings, defaming and reproaching words and carriages, come from this devilish lust of malice : and hence

hence it is that malice and evil speakings, or speaking evil one of another, are joyned together in Scripture, *1 Pet. 2. 1. Eph. 4. 31. Col. 3. 8.* declaring thereby, that such as will indeed keep clear from evil speaking, or speaking evil of one another, must of necessity banish and remove malice out of the heart, which is one of the roots and causes from whence they do proceed; and in the charge the Apostle gives the *Ephesians*, there is this remarkable in it, *chap. 4. 31.* saies he, *Let all bitterness and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking be put away from you; and when he comes to malice, he adds another all, οὐκ ἔσται κακία, cum omni malitia, with all malice; as much as to say, there must not be so much as one small sprig of the bitter root of malice suffered to abide within; all must be rooted out as ever you would be secured and kept from blaspheming and evil speaking; see also Col. 3. 8. 1 Pet. 2. 1. All which places shew that evil speakings proceed from malice in the heart. Malice is like fire in combustible matter; it will*

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swell and smother, and be restless until it have vent, and break out. And we may without breach of charity say, that such men and women as do speak evil of others, or of one another, to traduce and defame them, that they are malicious against them; or the malice that is in their hearts against them causes them to speak of, or against them as they do. But intending all possible and convenient brevity throughout, I shall not enlarge as I might do.

Fourthly, Evil-speaking, &c. proceeds from that which St. Paul calls *κακὸν δεινόν*, *malignitas*, *malignity*, Rom. 1. 29. which signifieth morosity, or churlish behaviour, which is a vice that construes all that a man doth or speaketh in the worst part; and this evil-mindedness towards a man, will cause him to speak the worst of him that he can, to make him odious and hateful. This vicious frame of spirit towards him, will cause him to think, and speak the worst; yea, to fancy and imagine what the Devil pleases of a person. And though it be
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there by the Apostle reckoned one of the Heathens vices, yet I am sure it is every jot as much, nominal Christians vice, as it was the Heathens. Now when men, whose hearts are full of malignity against others, have a mind and desire to reach them a blow, or by any means in any way to hurt and mischief them, they cannot obtain their ends so easily and safely on any thing that is his or theirs, as on their good names and reputations, to rob and spoyl them of these treasures and pretious Jewels. For should they finger their Lives and Estates, they know humane Laws will then seize on them for their so doing. Therefore they do like fower furly mastief dogs fly on, and tear out the throats of their good names, with their venomous tongues.

Fifthly, This wickedness proceeds from cursed Jealousie; I say from cursed Jealousie. There is a holy and blessed Jealousie, and there is a vitious and cursed Jealousie. A holy and blessed Jealousie respects a mans self, the cursed Jealousie respects others. All such men and women

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men as do believe the account that the Scripture gives of their hearts, and are accordingly acquainted with their prodigious wickedness, and cunning shifting deceitfulness, how apt they are to deceive and to be deceived by the world and Devil ; how frequently they gad and wander abroad, and fix on Idols ; to decline their duty, and to be false to God and men in duty ; how prone to promise much, and do nothing, to joyn issues with the world and Devil against God and our own peace ; how apt they are to err and misconstrue the mind and providences of God, and to gather up, defile, and pollute themselves with the dust and dirt of the world : surely such cannot but be very suspicious and jealous of them , and be constrained to keep a strict guard and watchful eye over them, *Prov. 4. 23.* And were men and women continually (as their duty is to be) in the exercise of this holy and godly jealousy over their own hearts, they would not be so guilty as they are of being jealous of others ; especially of their Christian Friends and Relations.

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But now, there is a vitious cursed jealousy which is exercised, and laid out about, and on others, where it ought not to be. This jealousy is a head-strong Lust and passion, it is like a wilde Bull in a net, like a Bear robbed of her whelps, and like a roaring Lyon. It is the raging fire of hell, kindled with the Devils breath; strong and violent in its motions, wicked and pernicious in its designs, and ends, toward the objects of its fury, *Prov. 6. 34. It is like the raging Sea, whose waters cast up mire and dirt, Isa. 57. 20.* and that on the good names of good men. This jealousy is so exceeding furious and desperate, that it will not spare nearest Relations, no more, nor so much, as it will an open professed Enemy. It is so strong a poyson, as that neither reason, evidence, interest, nor any arguments can restrain or mitigate the force and killing power of it. It is like fire in oyl, the more you throw water on it, the more it will flame; whether a man be innocent or nocent, it is all one to this cursed Lust; for the innocent shall feel the

the fury & weight of it as much as the innocent. This cursed mad passion, is brought forth, and feed with their own fancies and evil imaginations, begotten and bred by the Devil in the womb of pride and a guilty Conscience. For it is an experienced truth, that very few or no persons are jealous of others, but such as are as bad and vile themselves as they do imagine them to be, of whom they are jealous; for their Consciences accusing and condemning themselves, they do from thence by the help of the Devil, suppose and fancy that others are like themselves. So *Saul*, whose Conscience told him that he had a murderous mind against *David*, and sought his ruine; from thence suppose and fancy that *David* had the like towards *Saul*, 1 *Sam.* 24. but it was not so; for *David* was his true subject as *Saul* himself confessed to him; but notwithstanding, *Saul* ('tis said) eyed *David* from that day, and forward, which was a certain sign and fruit of abounding jealousy. This cursed jealousy in *Saul*, made him even sick again; and like a
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strong vomit in the stomach, restless until he had vomited it up on *David* his life and reputation. And therefore *1 Sam. 23. 19, 20, 21.* It is said, that when the *Zi-phites* informed *Saul* where *David* was, and that he might come and do to him, according to all his desire, and that they would deliver *David* into *Sauls* hand, that then *Saul* said, blessed be ye of the Lord, for ye have compassion on me; shewing thereby, that he was even sick, and in great distress and trouble before with envy and jealousy against *David*; and that he was so miserable, and that he stood in need of the peoples pity and compassion, and that it was a great ease of his grief, that they would take notice of him and help him out of his trouble, by delivering *David* into his hand. Blessed *Jeremy* was also in almost the like case by his adversaries jealousies of him, *Jer. 37. 13, 14, 15, 16.* They imagined that *Jeremy* was falling away from the Jews to their Enemies the *Caldeans*: say they, thou fallest away to the *Caldeans*. No, saies he, it is not so, *It is false, I fall not away to the Caldeans.*

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But his answer was not believed, nor his denying it accepted, but to the dungeon he must, for all that. They were jealous of him, and suspected his truth and faithfulness to them, how innocent soever he was; and although nothing of unfaithfulness was, or could be proved against him, yet as soon as one *Irijah* is jealous, and vents it to others by and by, without any further proof, poor *Jeremy* is condemned and executed: Such was the violence and rage, the fury and madness of their Jealousie against innocent and faithful *Jeremy*, as that condemn and execute him they will, only upon the high presumption of their suspicion of him.

And in like manner doth the evil spirit of suspicion and jealousy work now amongst us, among Husbands and Wives, Brethren, Neighbours, and Friends, which is not barren or unfruitful, but spawns abundantly in men and womens ears, and on their good names, even to the ruine and destruction of their Souls and outward concerns. Now as this cursed Lust is usually groundless, so it is restless
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and endless. It is usually groundless, and it is an unclean bird which can flie without wings; a Serpent that can go without leggs; for let but the Devil suggest to a man (especially a woman) that such a person doth not love him or her; that they past by him or them at such a time, and took no notice of them; that in such a place they were together, and they did not drink to them; or that they do not visit them as often as they do others; and therefore they may be sure that such do contemn, or at least, they do not regard them. Thus the Devil raises jealousies in the heart immediately, by suggesting such and the like trifles, especially to *Women* and *sorry effeminate men*; because they are more easily imprest with them, then men are. Thus the Devil made bold with the holy God himself, by raising jealousies of him in the heart of *Eve*, *Gen. 3. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5.* by insinuating to her, as if God was not so good to her as he might be, and that he forbid her to eat of the *Tree of knowledg*, on purpose to keep her in ignorance. Whereupon,
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she presently became jealous of God, and would neither *trust*, *obey*, nor think well of him any longer, but see if she could mend her self, and to eating she went, and calls her Husband to partake with her. Now as the Devil did at first with *Eve*, so he continues to deal with her Sons, and *especially her Daughters*; but this is not all the Devil now doth, namely, to suggest such conceits and fancies, I mean objects for them to work on, but he hath alwaies *Agents* ready for his turn, and these are such as the Apostle calls *Tatlers*, and *Moses Pedlars*, *Levit. 19. 16*. These he irritates, moves, and provokes to help him in his work, to carry on his designs against mens good names and reputations; and among other waies and methods he takes, this is one, namely, to move persons to jealousie, or to jealous thoughts one of another; and he gives his *Agents* their *errands*, instructs them in the matter and manner of his and their works; he hints to them what they shall speak, and how they shall speak, that so they may effectually raise jealousies in them,

them, and so cause them to back-bite and reproach them. First saies, the Devil, there are such men and women that I would have *defamed and reproached*, but *I cannot justly charge them with any crime* that may lay them under reproach: wherefore go to, I will send you to such persons, and when you come, endeavour to raise *jealousies* in them of such and such persons which I have *marked out for reproach*. Go to the *Wife* of such a man, and say to her, *I am affraid your Husband doth not love you very much*; or you may ask her the question (*as the Devil did Eve, yea, hath God said so*) what, is your Husband kind and loving to you? but this you must do wisely and cautiously, and usher it in with other discourse, or in talking of other matters, that so it may not be suspected: Then if she answer you slightly, or ask you, why you ask her such a question, you shall answer that it is for no hurt, but in love to her, for we wish you well; and further, you may tell her, that you have nothing to say against her *Husband*, but desire his
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good also ; but then you shall after you have drawn a little breath , insinuate also into her, that you do heartily wish her Husband did Love her, because you hope he is *a good man, and one that fears God* ; but that you cannot tell what to say, as to his Love to her : for, for ought she or they know, he may love other women better than her, such as are more beautiful and younger than you are. We saw him talk very familiarly with such and such women the other day, at such a mans house, or in the street, which causes suspicion. *But pray forsooth, doth he let you do what you will, spend what you please, shew his good likeing and approbation of all that you say and do ? doth he cry you up, and praise you to your face, and doth he in all things comply with, and conforme to you or no ?* No, that he doth not, I do assure you ; very well, *why, then it is evident that he doth not love you ?* and that was it we told you we did fear. For you may be sure, if he did love you better than other women, and as good Husbands love their Wives, *he would then permit*

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you to speak, and do what you please; spend what you please, shew his good likeing of all your doings, and praise you; yea, he would never do any thing without your leave and consent; he would not go abroad to visit Friends, or to do his business, without you went with him, or your free consent first obtained to go alone; he would not speak or talk with friends, but with your consent, and in your presence; wherefore you need no further proof of his want of love to you, and that he loves others better than you.

Reply. I, but this I can say for my Husband, that he seldome goes abroad without me, and that I want nothing, but have as much food and raiment, and other comforts as he hath himself; he doth no way restrain me of my liberty and Christian priviledges; he is very affable and kind to me; he never begins any quarrel with me, nor gives me one bitter word, untill I do provoke him; he is a careful and laborious man, and one that takes pains to provide enough for his Family; and if I stand in need of any thing, and ask it of him,

him, he is ready to give it me ; and I do hope he loves me.

We answer you Mistriss :

* All these, and such like things are nothing to the purpose, he may do all that, and much more, and yet not love you ; for if he did love you, as a Wife is to be loved, he would do all, and much more than we have said : So that now *forsooth* it is evident, he loves you not, and now the Wife begins to be *jealous* of her Husband.

Now by these and the like *Stratigems*, do they, with the Devil, raise *jealousies*, and promote strife and evil speakings between man and wife ; *I do speak what I know, and testifie what I have seen.* And as they do promote this wickedness between *Husbands* and *Wives*, so also among others, as I could abundantly and largely prove and demonstrate, were it my work and design so to do ; but I do design all possible brevity.

Now, this cursed *jealousie* is like fire that will catch hold on every straw ; a look, a word, yea the least omission of

the least mite of duty, or what is lookt for and expected from him. A jealous person will make the *worst* of every thing, in the person that he or she is jealous of. If he speak and do well, it will be accounted a feined and hypocritical work or speech; if he be sweet, loving, and kind, it is accounted dissimulation; and if at any time it wants matter to feed on, it will form many Ideas, it will conceit a thousand things, and the Devil will help them to matters enough to feed the fire of jealousy. So that a jealous person will make great matters of small, yea of none at all. They are like Cambyfes, who did but dream that his Brother should be King of Persia, and he put him to death. So if jealous persons do, by the help of the Devil, but Dream, that such do not love them, or that they slight them, or that they are guilty of such and such sins, or have any way wronged them, by and by it is taken for granted, and the next opportunity laid hold on to defame and reproach them for the errors or sins they have dreamt or fancied such to be guilty of

of. Yea, *jealousie* is like a fire that will eat and burn into the heart, it will pass a positive judgment and sentence on the secret thoughts of an object of *jealousie*, when it cannot fasten any thing else on him, either on his words or deeds. So that upon the whole, we may conclude, that a jealous person is an exceeding great plague to him, or her self, and also to all others who are concerned in their *jealousie*. The truth is, as they are *Monsters* among men, so are they *monstrously grievous and pernicious to men*; there is no living with them in peace and comfort any where; for at home, they shoot their invenomed arrows at, yea to the hearts of their near Relations; and abroad, they shoot fiery darts at their good names. A jealous person is not fit to live amongst men, no, nor usefull to beasts; for they are worser than beasts unto men, as some can experience. A man can have no friendship nor fellowship with jealous persons, let them be near or far off, Relations or Neighbours; neither are our good names in any safety.

among them, no more then our lives would be in a den of Lyons. For they will ever be gnashing at us, not with their teeth, but tongues, which will bite harder than their teeth, and make deeper wounds. A *jealous* spirit is a *devillish* spirit, a *base sordid and cruel* spirit, and it will never spare a good name, but ruine it, if it be possible.

We read in Scripture of a godly *jealousie*, such as *Job* had towards his Children, and *Paul* towards the *Corinthians* and *Galathians*, 2 Cor. 11. but that was the fruit of their love to, and zeal for the good of their Souls, and so they did manifest it to them; and they had grounds and reasons enough for it, by their evident evil doctrines and practices. But now the evil, cursed *jealousie* and suspicion I have been speaking of, hath another original work and end: It proceeds from a *wicked proud heart, and guilty conscience*; it is exercised and busied about the Devils work, and drives on a wicked design; namely, to blast, defame, and ruine mens good names and reputations; and the sin

is reckoned up amongst other abominations, *1 Tim. 6. 4.* and else where; and indeed, were I put to my choice, whether to live with jealous Relations, or with mad Bedlams; I think I should rather choose to live with the Bedlams than with the other. But the Lord deliver me, and all that fear his name, from this generation of men and women, for undoubtedly they are the *worst, and vilest of persons on Earth.* O! my Soul, come not thou into their secret, for in their anger they will murder the *innocent.* *Cursed is their anger, for it is fierce; and their wrath, for it is cruel.* This cursed Lust and Passion is another root of slandering and defaming.

Sixthly, Another root is, an *idle, vain mind*: I say an idle vain mind: For the mind that is not fixed on, and exercised about some civil, moral, or spiritual good, is the mind that is ready to receive and form evil; and when the mind hath prepared the matter, it is restless until the tongue hath vented it. These are the *busy bodies* the Apostle speaks of, *2 Thes.*

3. 11. *and the Tatlers, 1 Tim. 5. 13. And withal, they learn to be idle, wandring about from house to house; and not only idle, but Tatlers also, and busie-bodies, speaking things which they ought not.* Now experience shews beyond all contradiction, that such men (especially women) who are not good keepers at home, minders and followers of their own business, but are idle wanderers about from house to house, are the most common and notorious back-biters and defamers. And indeed they are proper, and fitted instruments for the Devil to make use of in this devillish work. For he knows it is a vain thing, to expect this service from such as are spiritually minded; *who have their minds, affections, and trading in Heaven,* Phil. 3. 20. Rom. 8. 6. Col. 3. 2. such as mind their business, and particular callings, as their duty in obedience to the will of God, and with faith in him; and who diligently follow every good work that God hath put into their hands to do, as they ought: I say such persons are not for the Devils turn, and therefore

fore he will not ordinarily seek to imploy them. But he hath others ready at hand; even such as are idle and vain, vain and idle mindes and hands he sends forth, and they are easily perswaded to his service, as a work suitable to their spirits; yea to run before they are sent, before they are hired by him.

Seaventhly, This wickedness is the *fruit of Envy*, I say of *Envy*. For such as men *Envy*, they will not, yea, they cannot forbear to *defame* and *traduce*. Now the objects of mens envy are some excellencies and priviledges which the Enviars themselves do want, and which they would have, but cannot obtain them; and therefore they will blast them all they can, in whom they are, that so they may not be respected and honoured for them; and (as they think) thereby, they shall suffer the less diminution of their own affected glory. For it is certain, that *proud and envious persons* cannot abide to have any equals, much less superiours in their fancied worth, honour, and renown with them. Envy is a most pernicious root of

bitterness, and very common amongst all sorts of men, though few or none will own it ; for it is such a base sordid wretch, such a loathsome and hateful Villain, as that it is ashamed of its self, to own its own name. Envy at the good endowments, honour, credit, riches, parts, reputation, or other good things which the soveraign Lord of all is pleased to bestow upon any men, is a foul and a devilish wickedness. *Shall my eye be evil towards men, because God is good ?* and shall I not thereby envy the goodness of God, and so highly provoke him, and incur his wrath and hot displeasure against me ? Is it not, or do I not thereby controule and envy, yea, condemn God himself ? yea, undoubtedly I shall, and so doth every envious person, who envies and grudges at the prosperity of other men which God gives them, because it so pleases him. Envy is the *evil eye* which the Lord tells us proceeds out of the wicked hearts of men, with its Companions, *Mark. 7. 20, 21, 22, 23.* For out of the heart of men proceed evil Thoughts, Adulteries, Mur-

Murders, Thefts, Covetousness, Wickedness, Deceit, Laciviousness, an evil Eye, Blasphemy, Pride; these things defile the man. This envious eye, is a defiler both of a man himself, his Soul, body, and spirit, and of the good names of others, by back-biting and reproaching them. Where this sin and cursed passion prevails, it is a cause of much wickedness among men, yea, of every evil work, saith the Scripture, *1am. 3. 16. For, where there is envy and strife, there is confusion, and every evil work; and saies he, it is a devillish sin, ver. 15.* The Devil is full of envy against good men, because they are in a better condition then himself; and therefore he is alwaies seeking to mischief them, because he envies them and their happiness. Envy is alwaies plotting and contriving evil against men; they cannot rest until they have made them vile and contemptible, whom they envy. *Cain* envied his Brother *Abel*, and kills him, *Gen. 4.* *Saul* envies *David*, and puts him to shame, and seeks his ruine, though he was his Son-in-Law, *1 Sam. 18.9.*

1 Sam.,

1 Sam. 20. 31, 34. Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, envied Moses, and reproached him, Numb. 16. 1, 2. Psal. 106. 16, 17. So some of the Romans envied Paul, and spoke slanderously of him, Rom. 3. Envy and Jealousy are near of Kin, they travel about night and day with mischief, and are very fruitful and successful. They do ordinarily go hand in hand, to bring forth fruit unto death, and they are both as strong as Lyons in their works, Prov. 27. 4. Wrath is cruel, and Anger is outrageous; but who is able to stand before envy, or jealousie (as it is in the Margir?) It is a sin that is full of deadly Poison, and so is the fruit of it also, Jam. 3. 8, 14, 16. It is a sin that is full of stings under its tongue, to destroy mens good names. Envious men cannot endure to see others better then themselves, or to be more respected or regarded. Envious men are exceeding proud men (for envy is the daughter of pride) and therefore do think themselves worthy of as much, or more honour and respect than others are; and if they have not all they expect; and think they

they may justly claim from others; and that others whom they think are no more deserving than themselves, have more honour and respect shewed, and given to them than they, they rage, and are mad, and so revenge themselves both on the honours, and honoured; they will fall on their good names, and secretly, or openly, (or both); they will do all they can to render them odious and contemptible.

As it is reported of Licinius, that he persecuted the Christians to death, because he understood they did not pray for him, as they did for Constantine. Licinius, his envy could not bear, to think, that *Constantine* should be more honoured and prayed for, than himself. So it is with envious persons now, they will persecute the good names and reputations of all the objects of their envy, even to the death, with their back-biting tongues, and reviling speeches, that so they may divest them of their honour, and rob them of their credit and reputations, and monopolize the whole into their own hands; yea, although they be near Relations.

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For envy knows no man, but to hurt and mischief him ; and envy is fierce and desperate.

Such men are a plague unto themselves : for their envy at others, is the rotting of their own bones, *Prov. 14. 30.* and they are the like plagues to others, by their defaming & back-biting tongues, *Prov. 12. 4.* *A vertuous woman is a Crown to her Husband, but she that maketh ashamed, is as rottenness in his bones.* This sin is every where in Scripture condemned, and forbidden. God will not allow us to envy the worst of men in their prosperity, *Prov. 3. 31. Prov. 23. 17. Psal. 37. 1.* and we find in experience, that where there is envy, there is evil speaking ; and where there is evil speaking against men, there is abounding envy, and accordingly the Scripture speaks of them as of cause and effect, *2 Cor. 12. 20. 1 Tim. 6. 4. 1 Pet. 21.*

Eighthly, *Defaming, and evil-speaking*, proceeds from mens *Atheism*, and *incredulity*. They do not believe that there

there is a God, or that he is such a God as hates all iniquity; that he hath forbidden and strictly charged them not to back-bite and speak evil of men; or that he neither sees, regards, or takes notice of their words and deeds, or will call them to an account, and judg them openly for, and of what they have spoken secretly to others reproach, *Psal. 14. 1, 2, 4, 6. Psal. 73. 11. Jude 14, 15.* For did they indeed believe these things, they would not, they could not do so wickedly as they do, in blasting the good names and reputations of men, *especially good men.* Did they indeed believe that God is the *Living, holy, just, jealous, and all-seeing God*, and that he will take vengeance of their inventions and reproaching hard words, which they do speak against men, *that he seeth in secret, and is privy to all their whisperings and back-bitings,* *Ezek. 33. 30, 31.* The Jews thought themselves safe enough, from all observation, when they spake evil of the Prophet *Ezekiel behind the door*, and so kept it from him; they did not believe nor imagine
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that they had a witness so nigh them; that God saw and took notice of the reproaching words they spake against him; but they were mistaken, for God saw and detected them, and brought their works of darkness to light. But I say, did men indeed believe and think so of God, they would *refrain their tongues from evil, and lips from speaking guile*, Psal. 34. Did they believe and understand how precious the *names of good men* are in Heaven, in the sight of God and Angels, and that God will one day plead their cause, and clear their innocency, honour, and exalt them, and recompence tribulation to them who troubled and wronged them, according to all the *hard speeches which they have spoken against them*, Jude 14. 15. surely they would rather cut off and pull out that mischievous and unruly member; then imploy it in such base dirty work: But I hasten.

Ninethly, *Defaming and evil-speaking* proceeds from anger and displeasure, from wrath and offence taken at them, (I put them altogether); for experience shews, that

that when men are offended at, angry, and displeased with persons, especially if their anger be run up into wrath, that they will let loose their tongues against them, cast dirt into their faces, and speak freely to their reproach, and shoot their arrows of indignation against them, *even bitter words*. A meek *Moses*, in a fit of anger, will call a whole Congregation of the Lord, *Rebels*, Numb. 20. 9, 10. how much more will such do so, *who have a name to live, but are dead*, Rev. 3. 1. and whose hearts are alwaies disposed to this evil work. In *Prov. 29. 22*. It is said that *an angry man stirreth up strife*, which he doth by bitter reproaching words. When men are boyling hot with anger, they neither care nor fear to speak what they please; for then they are like *Fools*, *they utter all their mind*. That which lurked there before, and was kept in; now comes forth by whole-sale, on the persons they are offended at, displeased, and angry with. For these are the seasons for *malice, pride, jealousy, envy and all hatred*, to come forth and shew themselves

selves. We say that Children and Fools will speak truth; so when men are be-fotted and be-fooll'd with the hot passion of anger, they will declare themselves to be a company of malicious and envious creatures towards them, what-ever shews they made before of love and friendship. Passion doth now unmask and unvail them, and God makes use of these seasons of mens angry fits, to convince them of their mistake, and misapprehensions of them, in taking secret Enemies into communion with them, instead of friends. And now they having unadvisedly discovered themselves to be their envious and malicious Enemies, they have an opportunity to withdraw from them, and avoyd their Company, which else might have been a snare unto them.

Tenthly, *Sometimes this wickedness proceeds from their Zeal.* They will defame and speak evil of men, from a kind of zeal they have against some sins which they do suppose such persons are guilty of. The Jews were Zealous for their Temple and Laws, and could not bear to hear a-

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ny to blaspheme or speak against them ; and their zeal was so strong, that when they supposed that Christ spake contemptibly of them, they charge him with Blasphemy, *Joh. 10. 36.* So also they dealt with *Stephen* and *Paul*, *Act. 6. 11. 13, 14. Act. 18. 12, 13.* So there are many now who live in the practice of many foul sins ; yet having a kind of Antipathy in their fancies against some one sin, that another may fall into, through the strength of temptation, and their own carelessness ; Oh ! how will they fall upon him with their mouths, and tear him with their *Lyon-like teeth*, and rend him with their *Bear-like claws* ; render him the vilest wretch upon earth ; tumble his good name up and down like a foot-ball ; aggravate and augment his sin, reproach and villifie him ; yea and doom him to Hell without *Bayl* or *Mainprize*, and never entertain a good thought of him more, but make him a *Heathen* and a *Publican*, and look on him with disdain and contempt, as the *Scribes* and *Pharisees* did on the *Samaritans* and *Publicans*,
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and all this in zeal against their sin ; - and that while themselves are *laden with sins, and led away with divers Lusts*. We read in *Joh. 16. 2.* that the Jews should *put the Servants of Christ out of their Synagogues*; that is, Excommunicate them out of all Communion with them, as if they had been a generation of vile and abominable wretches ; yea, saies Jesus Christ, *the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you, will think that he doth God Service*. So in *Isa. 66. 5.* Just so do some Zealots do now with mens good names ; they will raise up (in indignation against them) Reproach, and reprobate such as they hear have committed some sin, which they are *Zealous* against, and as they fancy, lies at a distance from their hearts and practices ; and that while their own sins are courted and embraced. When Paul was a *Blasphemer, a Persecuter, an injurious person, and a Murderer*, *1 Tim. 1. Act. 9.* he was a great Zealot against such as he deemed *Transgressors* of his Laws ; and he used and abused them as *Blasphemers* ; yea, he compelled them to
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Balsphem, and that in *Zeal*, against their Sin. *Phil.* 3. 6. *Acts* 22. 3. And for the Law, so it is said in *2 Sam.* 21. 1, 2. that *Saul slew the Gibeonites in his Zeal to the children of Israel.* And as he did, so do Men and Women now, reproach and defame, kill, and slay the pretious Names, and Reputations of good men in their *Saul-like Zeal*, against their pretended Sins. And such *Zealots* do usually with *Jehu*, drive on furiously.

11. Lastly, The Devil is another cause or agent of this wickedness. He is ordinarily the Author of this great Iniquity, and therefore it is peculiarly named by his name, and called *devillish*, *Jam.* 3. 15. and the fire of Hell, *Jam.* 3. 6. Defamers and Reproachers may call the Devil their Father and School-master, their Helper and Leader; for he sets them on, instructs them, and strengthens them in their work; he drives or drawes them to it, and makes them speak what he pleases, and of whom he pleases, to their reproach and infamy; and they must needs go (we say) whom
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the Devil drives. It is seldome that men go about this devillish work, without or before the Devil sends them, or without his help, counsel, and instructions. The Devil is the Authour and helper on of the work, by his *Slaves and Servants, his Drudges and Vassals.* He puts them in mind of their work, and hastens them forward to it. He sets *fire to the fuel* that is in their hearts, and shews them whose houses they shall burn, whose good names they shall reproach : He casts a mist before their Eyes, and raises a smoak in their Consciences, to smother them, that they may not speak, and hinder them. He stirs up, and blows the Lusts of *Pride, Malice, Hatred, Envy, Anger, and Jealousie,* that are in their hearts, and kindles them into a *flame* against such as they are sent and imployed to reproach, that so they may do it without fear or scruple. He perswades them that they are their Enemies, *and that they may do God service* by reproaching them : He will not suffer them to be at rest until they have done their work to purpose ; and when they have

have done, he will rock them asleep, and give them a *quiescent*, speak peace to them, and perswade them to speak peace to themselves. And in case they are discovered, and persecuted for their *Villany*, then he teaches them how to come off nobly, by *lying, equivocating*, and the like. So that then we may conclude, that whenever we do see, or hear *Reproachers*, surely there is the *Devil* too. And if it be demanded from whence they came, it may be truly answered, from the *Devil* they are come. And if they are asked whose *Servants* they are, and whose work they do, it may be truly answered, the *Devils Servants* they are, and his work they do. *Back-biting Reproachers* do wear the *Devils Livery*, and bear his *Image*; they have his heart, hands and tongue; they can transform themselves as often as they please, and work almost as subtilly as he. And as the *Devil* loves and delights in reviling and back-biting, so do they also. Is he diligent in the work? so are his *Servants* also: Is the *Devil* willing and ready to send, and imploy

ploy them in this work ? so they are ever willing and ready to obey him : when they do back-bite and reproach, it is from the Devil ; *when they do tear and wound others good names, they do it in, and from the Devil.* They may write the name and ends of the Devil upon all, as I could open at large, were it necessary. But seeing I have occasionally once and again on other heads, spoken of this before, I shall say no more of it now.

Thus you have seen some of the *roots and springs of this devillish sin* ; where it is conceived and bred , and by whom it is begotten and brought forth ; and you may know what the *Daughter* is by the *Father, and Mother* ; the *Devil and filthy Lusts.* This foul Monster, is not the issue of one *curst womb only*, or the fruit of one vile Lust only, but of many. This *Apple of Sodom* proceeds from many bitter roots, together with the help of the Devil ; for he doth more than usher and Midwife this *Monster* into the world, as hath been above declared. O ! horrid wickedness. O ! *Curst Monster*, that is begotten,
bred,

bred, brought forth, and nourished by such Parents, by the Devil, and so many abominable Lusts. Certainly Beasts will engender and bring forth Beasts : Vipers and Adders will bring forth their like : Cursed evil roots will bring forth the like fruits. *What better fruits can such Serpents spawn and bring forth,* than such monstrous, savage Creatures, or rather abominations, as have been before expressed and declared ? and what spawn, or fruit is there more monstrous and abominable, than a back-biting, defaming, reviling, and a reproaching tongue ? which I shall further prove, and demonstrate.

Thus I have manifested the sinfulness of this sin of open reviling, and of secret whispering and back-biting, slandering, defaming, reproaching, or raising, upholding, spreading, and receiving evil reports of others. First, *from the names the Scripture gives them.* Secondly, *from the roots, springs, and causes of it,* or from whence this grievous sin doth proceed.

Now I shall manifest, and prove the horred and prodigious nature of this sin.

First, *Secret and open Reproachers, and Defamers of the good names of men, are Murderers; I say Murderers.* The sin is a *murdering sin*, and the Actors of it are real *Murderers*. They do not only sin against, and transgress the *Ninth Commandment*, but the *Sixth* also; and if there be any Murderers in the world, they are Murderers who take away mens good names, as I shall (the Lord helping) demonstrate and prove, 1 *Joh.* 3. 15. We are informed, *that he that hateth his Brother, is a Murderer*: than how much more is he a Murderer, who not only hates him, but reviles, back-bites, defames, and reproaches him; who not only hates him, but doth him all the hurt and mischief he can; who wounds and stabs his good name to the heart.

But for the fuller and clearer opening of this, be pleased to consider, that every good man hath *four choice & rare Jewels*; which he dearly loves, and calls his *darlings*

lings and dearly beloved, which are nearer and of more account to him than ten thousand worlds: And these are; First, his Soul; Secondly, his Conscience; Thirdly, his good name; Fourthly, his life.

First, the Soul is of such an infinite value, as that our Saviour tells us, *that the whole world is not to be compared to it, Math. 16. 26. For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own Soul; or what shall a man give in exchange for his Soul?*

Secondly, His Conscience is also of infinite value; it is so excellent, pretious, and choice a Jewel, as cannot be valued according to the true worth of it. A man will rather lose all that he may, or can part withal, than his good Conscience. *He will rather suffer any tortures, and torments, burnings, rackings, starving, or any grief or sorrow, rather than part with, and lose a good Conscience.* Witness all the *Martyrs and Witnesses of Christ; who, rather than they would part with Conscience, would yield up their bodies, estates, and lives to the malice and fury of their*

Adversaries. So Paul tells us, *Act. 20. 23. 23.* (saies he) *None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto my self, so that I might finish my course with joy; that is, that I may keep a good Conscience, 2 Cor. 1. 12. For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our Consciences, &c.* And as they are ready to suffer any torments and losses, rather than to lose their good Consciences, so also they are ready to take any pains, to labour with all their might, to sweat and toyl night and day, rather than lose or part with good Consciences, *Act. 24. 16.* All such men and women as know and experience what a good and quiet Conscience is, will easily grant what I have said.

Thirdly, A mans natural life is a rare Jewel also, which he will not easily part withal. It is of more worth than any, or all earthly good things, *Math. 6. 26.* The Devil spake truth in this, *Job. 2. 4.* *Skin for skin, and all that a man bath, will he give for his life.*

Fourthly, a good name, is a good mans rich and choyce Jewel: and although he
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be far more obnoxious and liable to have this *Jewel* taken from him, than any other good he enjoys (as experience shews) yet the *Jewel* is a *Jewel* still, and of never the less value for that. *It is far better; and much more to be desired than fine gold, yea, than many thousands of gold and silver. It is of greater worth than health, ease, strength, wealth, long life, yea than life its self.* I say, *than life it self.* I do not say that a great name is better than these things, no, but a good name, which is the fruit and reward of grace and vertue; not of worldly riches, and lofty titles of honour. I know that many men have great names, but not good names; but one good name is worth ten thousand great names. *Solomon tells us, that a good name is rather to be chosen, then great riches.* It is a great judgment threatned to wicked men for their wicked words and deeds; *that their names shall rot*: but a choice mercy promised to the Righteous, *that their memory shall be blessed,* Prov. 10. 7. *The memory of the just is blessed, but the name of the wicked shall*

rot ; So in *Psal.* 112. 6. *The righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance,* *Ecclef.* 7. 1. *A name* (or a good name, as it is read in our Bibles, because that is the meaning and purport of it) *is better than precious oyntment* ; oyntment was very pretious, and in great account among the Jews upon many accounts. I shall name two ; first, because with Oyntment they did *Consecrate their Kings and Priests*, and all their holy Vessels, to the Lord, separating them from common use, unto holy and special uses ; as I might abundantly manifest, (but that I labour and aim at all possible brevity.) The Lord Jesus, who was both King, Priest, and Prophet, and the substance of all the *Types and Shadows* that we read of among the Jews, is said, in *Psal.* 45. 7, 8. *to be anointed by God the Father, with the oyle of gladness above his fellows, &c.* Secondly, Because of the *sweet fragrant smell and savour of their oyntment* ; it made a sweet and desirable perfume, to which these and many other Scripture-expressions do allude, *Cant.* 1. 3. *Psal.*

45. 8. 2 Cor. 2. 14, 15, 16. Eph. 5. 2.
 Now a *good name* is far more rich and excellent then many and great riches; far more sweet, pretious, and desirable, and upon many accounts, of transcendent (by greater worth then the most rare and choice oyntments that ever were in the world made by man. A *good name* is a kind of spiritual food, Prov. 15. 13. a *good report maketh the bones fat*. The meaning is, it maketh the spirit of a man chearful, strong and prosperous. In Psal. 38. 4. We read that David had no rest or health in his bones, by reason of his sin; he means, in his mind and conscience he had no rest. I may say of a deserved *good name*, as Solomon doth of Wisdom, Prov. 3. 15. *She is more precious than Rubies, and all the things thou can'st desire, are not to be compared to her. Length of daies are in her right hand, and in her left hand, Riches and Honour*, ver. 16. The Jews have a saying, *præstat habere amicum in foro, quam aurum arca reconditum*; that it is better to have a Friend abroad, than Gold laid up in a Chest at home.

And doubtless we cannot have a better friend abroad, than a good name ; nor a better friend at home, than a good conscience. A man may have a good name abroad, with a bad conscience at home ; and a good conscience at home, and a bad name abroad ; but he is the happy man who hath both. *Nazianzen* saith, *præcipuum beneficium est in rebus honestis laudari laus enim parit emulationem, emulatio virtutem virtus felicitatem* : it is a chief benefit in vertuous things to be praised, for praise causeth emulation, emulation bringeth forth vertue, vertue happines ; Fame & a good name is, or ought to be the fruit & reward of Vertue. *A woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised, Prov. 31. 30.* and he that feareth the Lord, is the honourable man, *Psal. 15. 4.* A good conscience at home, and a deserved good name abroad, are two rare and excellent companions indeed ; and he that doth by a vitious course of life, deprive himself of his *good name*, is a self-Murderer ; and all such as do *unjustly, irregularly, and unduly* deprive any man of his

his good name, is a murderer also, as really
 as he is who doth so take away another
 mans life, as I shall by and by prove and
 demonstrate. A good name is so rare,
 choice, and excellent a mercy, both to a
 man himself and to others, as that his life
 is hardly worth the keeping without it,
 especially if he be a professor of the holy
 name and waies of Jesus Christ. With-
 out a good name, a man is dead while he
 liveth; he stinketh above ground, and he
 is a burden to himself, and all sorts of
 men, excepting such as make sport with
 his name, as the *Philistims* did with Samp-
 son, when they had put out his eyes. A
 good name, is a good mans Ornament and
 Crown amongst men, yea, in a sense, his
 Estate and Life. Therefore, when a
 good man is robbed of his good name,
 he is robbed of the best Jewel and rich-
 est Estate he hath without his Soul and
 Conscience, or that which falls within the
 power of men to rob him of: A good
 man, were far better be a poor man, with
 a good name, than a very rich man with a
 bad, yea, a good man were better dye with

a good name, than live to gray hairs with a bad and dirty name. And therefore, such as do *murder their good names*, are greater murderers than such ~~are~~, who do *murder their bodies*, and deprive them of their natural lives; and such men and women will one day find answerable punishment from the Lord, who is privy to all the wickedness of their hearts, and *murder of their tongues*.

Now the two first of these excellent Jewels, namely, their *Souls & Consciences*, are beyond the reach of these back-biting *Murderers*, they cannot come at them to do them any hurt; every man may greatly wrong, if not utterly ruine his own Soul and Conscience by sin, *Prov. 8. ult.* but men cannot wrong each others Souls and Consciences without their own consent; yea, the Devil cannot wrong them without their own consent: No, though Men and Devils do all their daies assault them, yet can they not win them, nor take them Captives.

But now the other two Jewels, namely, *their natural lives and good names*, are every

ry day exposed to the *rape and violence*, to the *malice and envy* of all men, to be torn and ravished with the *Lusts and Teeth of wilde Beasts*. There is no safety, no City of refuge for them in the world, especially their good names. They are not, they cannot be secure any where night or day, from *devouring Wolves, roaring Lyons, and subtle Foxes*, either at home, or abroad. If they escape the teeth of *Adders* abroad, they are in danger of being bitten with *Vipers* at home, as sad experience shews: Yea, the more eminently, and singularly good their names are, the more obnoxious they are to the fury of these *Murderers*. None that we know, or read of, either in sacred Record, or in humane Authors, that have been so much defamed & reproached, as the Saints, who have been most renowned for godliness, as *Jeremy, David, Job, Nehemiah, Paul, Luther, Calvin*, and many others. And it is the portion of all such as will live godly in Christ *Jesus*, to suffer persecution; not only from the swords of men, but from their
tongues.

tongues also, 2 Tim. 3. 12. *Ismael persecuted Isaac with his tongue*, Gal. 4. 29. and what persecution is there so bad and pernicious as that of the tongue.

Now, that this is a *murdering sin*, and the *Authors* and *Actors* of it are murderers, I shall prove, Ezek. 22. 9. *In thee are men that carry tales to shed blood*, Prov. 12. 6. *The words of the wicked, are to lay wait for blood, but the mouth of the upright shall deliver them*, Prov. 18. 8. *The words of a Tale-bearer, are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly*, Prov. 11. 9. *An Hypocrite with his mouth, destroyeth his Neighbour*, Hos. 7. 16. *Their Princes shall fall by the sword, for the rage of their tongue*, Psal. 10. 7, 8, 9. I might heap up abundance of other Texts of Scripture if it were necessary, to confirm this assertion, that back-biting defamers are Murderers in the judgment of the Blessed and only Wise God; whatever men may think of them, or whatever they do think of themselves; yet they are in the account of God, horred *Murderers*; and for a further confirmation
of

of it, the Lord assures us, that their *tongues are most poysonous, venemous and deadly stings, swords, arrows, and fire.*

First, God calls their back-biting, defaming tongues, *Asps*, and the poyson of *Asps*, Job 20. 14, 16. Deut. 32. 33. *The cruel venom of Asps*, Rom. 3. 13. *the poyson of Asps is under their lips.*

Secondly, They are called and compared to *Dragons*, Deut. 32. 33. Psal. 44. 16, & 19. *verses compared.*

Thirdly, They are called and compared to *Vipers*, Job 20. 16. *The Vipers tongue shall slay him.*

Fourthly, They are called and compared to *Adders*, Psal. 140. 3. *Adders poyson is under their lips.*

Fifthly, They are compared to *Serpents*, Psal. 140. 3. Psal. 58. 4. Now as the poyson of these venemous beasts is deadly and mortal, so are back-biting defaming tongues, Jam. 3. 8. *They are full of deadly poyson; they are full, yea full of deadly poyson; namely, to kill and murder the good names of good men.*

And

And one such tongue, is all these vile hurtful beasts, and it hath all the venome of them all in it. *O monstrous tongues ! O, horred monsters !*

Sixthly, They are compared to *Lyons*, Psal. 35. 16, 17, 21. Psal. 57. 4. Psal. 58. 6. For as Lyons do tear and rend Creatures with their paws, so do back-biting defamers tear and rend with their cursed tongues, the good names of their Neighbours, Friends, and Relations.

Seventhly, They are compared to *Dogs*, Psal. 22. 13, 16. Psal. 68. 23. Now, there are two sorts of Dogs which are very mischievous ; there is the *barking Dog*, which will give warning before he bite and tear ; and there is the *still sullen Dog*, which will bite and tear a man before he sees him, or is aware of him. The first sort do fitly resemble the open *Scolds* and *Revilers* ; and the latter sort do fitly resemble the *whispering and back-biting Revilers* ; and the latter sort are much *worser* then the other.

Eighthly, Their tongues are called and compared to sharp *swords*, ready fitted,

ed and prepared for slaughter, Psal. 57. 4. Psal. 64. 3, 4. Prov. 12. 18. So likewise, to arrows and spears, Psal. 57. 4. Now we know, that swords are prepared and intended instruments to kill, and destroy. Just so are back-biting and defaming tongues, which indeed are the worst and most pernicious swords.

Ninethly, they are called and compared to fire, that rageth, burneth, and consumeth without mercy, Psal. 57. 4. Prov. 16. 27. and not only common, ordinary fire, but the fire of Hell, Jam. 3. 6. And the tongue is a fire, it setteth on fire the course of nature, and it is set on fire of Hell. By these few hints that I have given, you may clearly see what a monstrous, horred, pernicious, and prodigious evil, a back-biting, defaming tongue is; what a cruel murderer and destroyer it is; what account God hath of it; and how exceeding hateful it is to him. St. Jerome saith, *Quicquid separat fratres infernum est appellandum*, whatsoever separateth those that are in Brotherly peace, is to be called Hell. St. Cyprian saith, *perversus*

in ore suo portat perditionem, & in labiis suis ignem condit : the perverse carryeth destruction in his mouth, and in his lips he hideth fire. And therefore exhorteth the Servants of God, that they decline them, and shun all speech and conference with them. *Calvin* tells us in his Exposition on *Math.* that they that do proudly lift up themselves, or do hurt men with any opprobrious words, are Murderers; and that *Christ* adjudgeth them to Hell fire, which break out into Reproaches; yea, the Holy Ghost tells us, that the tongue is a world of iniquity, *Jam. 3. 6.* the meaning is, that the tongue hath all the murdering, killing, and poysonous qualities in it, that all the swords, spears, fire, and venomous beasts have in them, to murder, kill, and devour men, especially their good names.

Now of all murder, next to Conscience, and Soul-murder, this is the worst; for, as was said, a holy, wise, and publick man, had much rather (was he put to his choice) part with his life, then his good name. *For it is far better to dye honourably*

rably, then I've contemptibly. Nothing did so much trouble and afflict *Job*, as his Friends *defamings*; he lost his Children, and Estate, his Health, Ease and Strength; but these losses troubled him not; but he was exceedingly troubled at his Reproaches; especially those he received from his friends, as may be seen in many places of his book.

Secondly, *Such as defame and reproach mens good names, are Thieves, and Robbers*; I say Thieves and Robbers. The open *Defamers* and *Reproachers*, are the high-way Thieves and Robbers; and the back-biting *Defamers*, are the secret and night-*Thieves and Robbers*. For as night-Thieves break in, and carry away a mans goods secretly, and unknown to the Owner: So these *secret, whispering, and back-biting Reproachers*, do rob a man of his rich *jewel*, his good name, so secretly, and in the dark, as that it is a hard matter for him to find it out, and convict them. And these are the worst sort of *Thieves* as all men know; and so are *Back-biters*, the worst Revilers of all the herd. Ma-
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ny think that the *hands* are the worst instruments of *Robbery*, but they are greatly mistaken; for the *tongue* is the worst Thief and instrument thereof. *And as the tongue destroys more than the sword*, so the tongue destroys more than the hands, by robbing and spoyling men of their good names; I say, then the hands of Thieves, do mens Estates by their robberies. These *tongue-robbers*, are much more abominable, and more inexcusable than common Thieves, who rob men of their Estates: For

First, they oftentimes rob through a kind of necessity to satisfy their hunger, as *Solomon* speaks, *Prov. 6. 30.* but *curst back-biting Robbers* do not so; for it is not hunger, or necessity puts them upon it.

Secondly, Common Thieves and Robbers do not steal and rob men from hatred, malice, and envy; not because they do hate and envy them, but to enrich themselves. But now, *tongue-Robbers* do steal, and rob, from malice, hatred, and envy, at, and against their persons, and

and *good names*, as hath been shewed before.

3. These tongue-Robbers do rob and steal from men their *richest treasures*; I say their richest treasures (*viz.*) their *good names*; and they will not be contented and satisfied with any lower prize than the best that can be taken from them by men. But now common Thieves will be content, if they can get a mans money, plate, or other goods, though they get not his *Jewels*.

Fourthly, Common *Thieves and Robbers* do not seek the ruine and destruction of a man in robbing him, but *tongue-Robbers* do; they would put out his name from under Heaven, if they could: they would not leave him root or branch remaining, whatever they do pretend to the contrary. So that in these and other respects (which I could name) *tongue-Thieves* are the worst Robbers, and the most to be *dreaded, watched, and abhorred*.

Now every man knows what a *Thief* is: a *Thief* is one, who doth either secretly

ly or openly take away, appropriate to himself, and make use of that which is none of his own, but the property of some other men. Now every mans *good name* is as much his *interest and property*, as any thing whatsoever he possesseth in the world : I say, as much as any money or cloaths are which he hath ; and therefore such as do secretly or openly take, or endeavour, by evil speaking, or by raising an evil report on him, *to take away his good name*, he doth thereby rob him of his property and interest, and so he is a *notorious Thief*, and he shall undoubtedly suffer the punishment of a Thief hereafter, though he may escape the *Gallows* here. A *Defamer* is a *notorious Transgressor* of the *eighth Commandment*, as well as of the *ninth and sixth*. For, when God forbids men to *steal*, in the *eighth Commandment*, he clearly informs us, that we must not take from a man unjustly, unduely, or irregularly, any thing that is his. And where God forbids us, as he doth in the *tenth Commandment*, not to Covet, he expressly shews there, what his

his meaning is in the other Commandments, that respect men by these words, *Nor any thing that is thy Neighbours.* That is, thou shalt neither Cover, nor take away from thy Neighbour, (that is, any man) what is his, *Gen. 20. 17. Deut. 5. 21.*

If any *Object*, and say, *But suppose he have by sin forfeited his good name, and we speak evil of him, and blaze abroad his sin; are we then by so doing, Thieves and Robbers?*

I *Answer*, Yes, that you are ; For,

First, It is not once or twice sinning, or committing this or that sin, be it what it will, that may, or ought lawfully to deprive a man of his good name ; for then, such as the holy God doth must honour, and respect ; men might dishonour & reproach, which assuredly God will not endure. We find some of the most eminent Servants of God sinning with a high hand against God and men, as *Noah, Lot, Sampson, Ely, David, Solomon, Asa, Jehosaphat, Peter*, and others ; yet God highly honoured them, and hath not
with,

withstanding preserved their names, and made them as sweet perfumes to all generations; and he will not by any means allow any man upon earth to touch them with the tip of their tongues, to detract from their honour and reputations.

Secondly, It may be thou doest not *certainly and infallably know* he hath so sinned; or in case thou doest, thou knowest not but that he hath repented; For it may be he hath repented of his sin; or his *broken bones are set in joynt again*, as the word is, *Gal. 6. 1.* (though by sin they were broken) by *faith and repentance*. And if God hath pardoned and healed him, surely thou oughtest to do so too. If God hath covered his sin, *Psal. 32. 1.* then great will be thy sin to uncover it. For if God cover thy Neighbours Nakedness, well mayest thou do it; yea, thou art indispensibly bound to do so. And wo be to those who do uncover that which God hath covered.

Thirdly, In case he be guilty, and hath in a sense *forfeited his good name and reputation*, by following a course of sin,
yet

yet it may be, prayers, sharp reproofs, and admonitions may recover him again : bring him to repentance, and reformation, and so he may be more holy, meek, righteous, and circumspect than he was before he fell ; a greater honour to the Gospel, and more useful in his generation to men ; and if so, *he hath regained what he lost by sin, and much more.* And know, that it is the will of God, and thy duty, when thou certainly knowest a *reputed good man*, to fall into any *scandalous sin*, to endeavour his *conviction and restoration*, and not to lay open his *shame*, and declare his *folly*, nor harbour hard and uncharitable thoughts of him, and labour to render him *odious to others* : No, that is contrary to the heart, and will of God, and the high-way to make the offender desperate.

Fourthly, In case he have by often repeating of his sin, by remaining obstinate under reproofs and admonitions, forfeited his reputation ; yet thou hast nothing to do with, nor any authority to seize on the forfeiture, no, that belongs not to thee

thee to take it and spread it abroad, to dispose of it at thy own will and pleasure. If a man have forfeited his Estate for committing of Murder, and being Condemned for it, he hath now no more title unto, and interest in his Estate, but it is lost in Law to the King : may any man, who will, make seisure of it ? I know not : why ? because it belongs to the King, or to such as he shall appoint to seize on, and take hold of the said forfeiture. Just so it is in this case, *a man hath forfeited his good name by sinning; I, but thou hast nothing to do to seize it, and dispose of it as thou pleasest* : No, no, for he hath not forfeited it to thee, but to *his sovereign Lord and King* ; so that he may take it and dispose on't as he thinks fit : but who gave thee power to do so ? or who hath required this of thee ? Oh ! consider these things, and lay them to heart ; you may be Thieves and Robbers in seising on, and disposing of forfeited *names and reputations*, as well as in seising on, and disposing at your own will and pleasure, such as are not so forfeited.

And

And I would seriously advise you, as you love your Souls, not to meddle with them in such way, for they will prove to you in the end, as the *Ark did to the Philistims, and their Dagon*; and your Sovereign will condemn you for Treason against his *Crown, Laws, and Dignity*.

Every man is bound by the Law of nature, and the *second Table of the written Law of God*, to do his utmost to preserve and secure to his Neighbour whatever is his. For there is ever implied in all the negative precepts and commands of God, positive duties, as all men confess; so that when God forbids us to *Murder, or Steal*, he doth in the same commands, require us to do all we can, as we have opportunity, to secure and preserve our Neighbours lives, health, peace, and interests, or what ever is our Neighbours. Oh! then how great is their sin, who do not only utterly neglect to secure and preserve their good names, but do maliciously and violently rob them of them, as all *back biting defamers* do. And doubtless they shall have one day, judg-

ment without mercy, who have not shewed mercy to them, Jam. 2. 13. And the Apostle Paul assures us, that Thieves shall not inherit the Kingdom of God, 1 Cor. 6. 10. David complains to God of such Thieves, Psal. 119. 61. See also Nahum. 3. 1. and Prov. 21. 6, 7. St. Ambrose speaking of Theft, saith, *Adeo contra naturam, ut inopia hoc magis extorquere videatur, quam natura suadere*; it is so contrary to nature, that want may seem rather to force it, than nature to perswade it. But now it cannot be so in mens robbing of good names, for they cannot be constrained by want, to take and steal them away from men.

Thirdly, Such as speak evil of, and cast reproach on the good names of others, are notorious Transgressors of the Seventh Commandement also. They are guilty of Rape and Whoredome, of that filthy, beastly sin of Uncleanness, which God will judg, Heb. 13. 4. For as that sin consists in defiling a man or womans body, so also in defiling a man or womans good name. For as a man by committing that folly
with

with a woman, makes her unclean, and she him, with whom she commits it; so by defaming; and ravishing anothers good name, he makes him unclean before men, by representing his pure name in a *whorish garb and dress*. And as a man by casting dirt on clean Cloaths, and white Linnen, makes them odious, and filthy, stinking, and unsavory, hateful, and loathsome; so do those men, who do reproach the good names of good men; I say, they do thereby *defile and pollute them*; making them look like *base Harlots, and filthy Varlots*. For, look as Whoremongers do defile and pollute the bodies of their Strumpets, so do these Whoremongers, I mean *Defamers and Reproachers* defile and pollute mens good names with their *filthy tongues*. Now, look as men may, and do defile, and pollute the great, the holy, the unspotted, and glorious name of God, so they may, and do defile and pollute the good names of good men also. And how do men defile, and pollute the holy and glorious name of the blessed God? but by *blast-*

ing, and darkening the shining lustre, beauty, honour, excellency, and loveliness of it; and by rendering it vile and contemptible, as the Jews did in *Babylon*, and Professors do now, *Ezek. 20. 39. Mal. 1. 7. 12. Rom. 2. 14.* Now as Gods Name was polluted by them, so he threatens to pollute them, by making their names contemptible, *Mal. 2. 9.* yea, he had done it, by giving their names to Reproach, *Ezek. 22. 4.* hence they are for their polluting and defiling the name and worship of God, frequently called *Adulterers, Whores, and Whoremongers* in the Scripture, *Jer. 3. Ezek. 16. Isa. 57. Jer. 9. Hosea 7.* Now then if they are *Adulterers*, who do defile and pollute the glorious Name of God, and his holy things, then surely they are *Adulterers*, who by Reproaches do defile the good names of men; especially if they are good men, and have the name of God written on, and his glorious Image stamp't upon them. Yea, such are the worst *Adulterers*, though the other are abominable and vile, yet these are more vile and abominable; and their sin is
 grea-

greater, who do ravish & defile the good names of good men : For,

First, Carnal Adulterers, may commit Carnal filthiness with persons, not from the root and heat of hatred, malice, and envy against them, but only from the heat and strength of Carnal Lusts abounding in their hearts, through want of watchfulness, and the fear of God to restrain them, as it was with *David*; 2 Sam. 11. but now these tongue-Adulterers do defile and pollute the good names of men, because they do hate and envy them.

Secondly, These Adulterers are greater sinners than such as do defile the bodies of persons in their ends; I say in their ends : For, *Carnal defilers* may not intend any further mischief or hurt to them, but barely to satisfy their filthy Carnal Lusts on them (though that is bad enough to both); but now these *tongue-Defilers* do ordinarily design and intend the ruine and destruction of such as they do defile, and pollute with their filthy tongues. Yea, as *Jeremy* speaks,

Jer. 23. 40. to make them an everlasting Reproach, and a perpetual shame, which shall not be forgotten.

Thirdly, The other vile Adulterers do act in committing their Carnal wickedness with consent; they do both agree to commit *Ludeness*; but these *tongue-Adulterers* do ravish and commit rapes on the good names of men: They extort their good names from them by force and violence: They will defile them by meer might and malices directly against their wills. Now we know that such Adulterers as defile the flesh of others by force and rapine, are the worst sort of Whoremongers, who commit Carnal Adultery, as *Amnon* did, *2 Sam. 13.* by force and violence. Just so do these *tongue-Adulterers*.

Fourthly, Carnal-Adulterers and Defilers will seldome do as *Amnon* did; namely, defile so near Relations as their own Sisters, or their Fathers Wives, as the incestuous *Corinthian* did, *1 Cor. 5. 1.* No, nature will so loath that, as that men must be very much given up of God

to hardness of heart, blindness of mind, and fearedness of Conscience, before they can do so; but ordinarily their wickedness is committed with strangers. But now these back biting defaming tongues will not spare any, who fall in the way of her malice, hatred, and envy; let them be never so near them, let them be *Husbands, Wives, or Parents*, they will ravish and defile them for all their Relation; yea, they will defile their good names with much more vehemency than they will do others. And as Adulterers do cause such as they defile to sin, so these tongue-defilers do greatly tempt and provoke such whose names they defile to sin also; for there are few who can bear it, to see their good names ravished and polluted by *Adders-tongues*; but with *Abfalom* they will meditate and act revenge on them, as *Sampson* did on the *Philistines* for his two eyes. And as *Ammons* defiling *Abfaloms* Sister, did tempt *Abfalom* to study and act murder against *Ammon*, 2 Sam. 13. so do defiling tongues by their defaming of others, greatly provoke them to a retaliation;

namely, to return reviling for reviling, as may be seen by that earnest dehortation, 1 *Pet.* 3. 9. And if it so happen, as that the persons whose good names they have ravished and defiled, should by the power of grace, and the spirit and fear of God, be restrained from retaliating, and making such evil improvements of the injury done unto them by these *Revilers and Defilers*; yet, let all such know that their sin is never the less for that; for they have done what they could to tempt and perswade them to it.

We read in Scripture, *that Shechem defiled Dinah, Jacobs Daughter, Gen.* 34. 5. by lying with her; and the like we read of many others. So likewise we read of *the tongues defiling of men, Jam.* 3. 6. *not by lying with them, but by belying them*; not by Carnal Copulation, but by Verbal Crimination. Our Saviour tells us in *Math.* 15. 19, 20. *that the works of the tongue do defile the man, as well as other things*; and let all such men and women know, that they are already doom'd, and sentenced to Hell by the Lord Jesus Christ

Christ himself, who are defilers of good names with their tongues, as well as those other sinners mentioned in *Rev. 21. 8, 27.* So in *1 Cor. 6. 10.* Pray read the Texts, and mind them well.

Fourthly, *As Defamers are guilty of Whoredom, and filthy Uncleanness ; so they are notoriously guilty of transgressing the Tenth Commandment.* For they are exceedingly Covetous ; they do greedily cover, and earnestly desire to gain to themselves the reputations, love, honour, and respects they see them possess and enjoy whom they do envy ; and finding no other way so feasible, and probable, to obtain their ends as this, they will not spare any Arrows, or neglect any opportunity to obtain what they do greedily gape after ; but to work they will go with their tongues, to stain their Reputations, and that either by raising or spreading *evil reports of them ;* digging up some old sin or other that hath been buried many years in the grave of *Oblivion*, and put it into a new dress, with additions and aggravations, and so send it fly-

ing abroad ; or else if they do think that way will not take, nor effect their ends, then they will speak contemptuously, and villifying of him, as if there were no worth, nor desert in him, wherefore he should be respected or desired ; and by this means they prevail greatly with some silly Souls to slight and contemn him ; yea, if he have but one small speck of blemish about him, but a white pimple in his face, they will represent him as a person full of mange and itch all over his body. If he have but a defect in his speech, he must be taken for a rude Ignoramus. Thus the Jews dealt with blessed *Jeremy*, chap. 18. v. 18. Thus they dealt with *Jesus Christ*. So did some with the Apostle *Paul*. They walkt in both the afore said waies with them, somtimes by down-right *slanders* ; and when they saw that, that way would not find acceptance, then they fell to villifying, & speaking contemptibly of them, *Math. 12. 24. Mark 6. 3. Rom. 3. 8. 2 Cor. 10. 10.* And all this, because they do either hate his person, envy his fame, or seek and desire to wrest his Crown from

from him to themselves, that so they may glory, and triumph in the praise they have by wicked tongues gotten from him.

But in case they do despair of getting it to themselves, what they labour to take from him, yet their *Coveteousness* being attended with *Envy*, they will not suffer the honour and fame he deservedly hath, to abide with him; no, but they will *disrobe and spoyl him of it*, although they themselves may never have it to wear about them, to the augmenting of their own *Fame and Renown*. Yet I say, they will spoyl him of it, by doing to him, as a *Souldier* did in the Army, who when he lay Seige to a Town, and saw a brave Horse of the Enemies, which he earnestly coveted and desired, which he could not, or durst not adventure over (for fear of the Enemy) to fetch him to himself, he made no more ado, but shot and kill'd the horse, saying, *though I cannot have thee for my use, yet I will kill thee, that another may not have thee from me alive*; just so do *Defamers*, and *Coveteous Reproachers*,

preachers, with the good names of good men; they do envy them, and covet their fame and honour, love, and respect unto themselves; but if they cannot win it to themselves, as their covetuous, greedy hearts do desire, yet they will shoot their invenomed Arrows at them, that so neither they who have it, may keep it, nor any other take it away from them, for themselves; and therefore kill it they will without mercy. These Covetuous Defamers are like unto *Balaam*, 2 Pet. 2. 14, 15. saies the Apostle, *An heart they have exercised with covetuous practices; Cursed Children, which have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam, who loved the wages of unrighteousness.* Now if you will know what that way of *Balaam* was, pray look into the 22, 23, 24, Chapters of *Numbers*, there you shall find him hired by *Balack King of Moab*, to Curse or Defame *Israel*, and promised to reward *Balaam* for his pains. *Balaam* attempts it, to *Balack* he goes with a design to blasphem and defame, to curse and reproach

proach them; according to *Balak's* desire; that he might enrich himself thereby, which Peter calls the wages of unrighteousness. *Balaams* Covetous heart carried him out to curse and ban the people of God, in hope of getting to himself thereby riches and fame; he would willingly have raised himself upon *Israels* ruine; and so do Defamers do now. And so did Covetous *Judas*: he sold his Lord for thirty pieces of Silver, as, or for a Traytor and Blasphemer, to the Priests. But why did he do so? why, it was because he was Covetous; so did the Covetous Scribes and Pharisees, Luk. 16. 14: they derided Christ, why? because they were Covetous; or from their Covetous hearts. Now back-biting Defamers do earnestly covet the good Names and Reputations of good men; they care not who they do debase and dishonour, so they may but gain by it. Covetousness and Envy, or Covetous and Envious persons, are Companions in this Iniquity together, and are seldome or never separated from each other in defaming. *Saul* (as hath been

been shewed) greatly Envied Davids praise and fame, and he coveted all to himself ; and therefore sought by all means to ruine *David*, his fame and life. Covetousness and Envy will have all the riches, and honour of other men, or they will not be satisfied. *Solomon* tells us, *Prov. 1. 19.* that he that is greedy of gain, (whether of fame, honour, or riches) takes away the Life of the owners thereof. If their lives must go for it, much more their good names, which they may get at an easier rate than their lives. When men have a mind to extol and magnifie a colour to the beholders, they will lay it by some base or dirty colour, that so it may shine forth the more gloriously. So when men Covet to make great and glorious their own names, and reputations, they will lay them by, and compare them with such as they have made base and dirty. So *Saul* dealt with *David*, 1 Sam. 22. 7, 8. saies he, *hear now ye Benjamites, will the Son of Jesse give you Fields? &c.* He laboured to make *David* black and dirty, that so he might shine the brighter in the
 peo-

peoples eyes. Now, *Wo be to them who Coveteth an evil Covetuousness,* Hab.2.9. for although they do think to make a rich purchase of it, and to advance and magnifie themselves by what they gaine by their Covetous devices, yet assuredly they will find it a *Cursed wedg of gold to them at long run*; yea, even in this life, as *Achan and Saul*, and many others have done.

Fifthly, *Evil speakers, or Defamers,* are *peace-breakers, make-bates, and sowers of discord, strife, and contention amongst Neighbours, Friends, and Relations.* They break and scatter peace, they raise and foment bitter envyings and strife among Friends and Relations, that were in sweet friendship and concord, as sad experience shews. Now if *Peace-makers are blessed,* and pronounced so to be, by Jesus Christ, *Math. 5. 9.* then without all question, *Peace-breakers are accursed,* and that both of God and men; and doubtless they are the most *Accursedst Generation of men and women on Earth,* who are indeed *Peace-breakers*; and there are no greater
Peace

Peace-breakers upon Earth than whispering and back-biting defamers are. Peace-breakers are men marked out for Wrath and Vengeance, Heb. 12. 14. and they are the objects of Gods hatred and abomination, Prov. 6. 16, 19. These six things doth the Lord hate, yea, seven are an abomination unto him. What is the seaventh? look into verse 19, and you shall find, it is sowing of discord among Brethren. And that this is the work of the generation of men and women that I am speaking of, you may see, Prov. 16. 28. A froward man soweth Strife, and a whisperer separateth chief Friends. This froward whisperer is also branded with a mark of ignominy in verse 27. he is then called an ungodly man, or a man of Belial. So in Jam. 3. 8, 10, 14, 16.

These Peace-breakers, make, cherish, and foment war, where God hath commanded and made peace. They raise, and maintain war in the hearts, looks, tongues, and hands of Relations and Friends. They divide and cut asunder the Nerves and bands of peace: There is no peace.

peace to be found, or long enjoyed, where these wicked Tale-bearing and Defaming tongues come, and are hearkened unto, and entertained. *They carry the fire of Hell about with them, to kindle flames of strife and contention*; and they are unwearied in blowing the coals, like their Father the Devil, *Jam. 3. 6, 8. Prov. 16. 27.* These are the men who go from place to place, from one man to another, to gather up poysonous seeds, and sow them abroad, to break all quietness and friendship, *Ezek 22. 9. In thee are men that carry tales to shed blood*, saith the Prophet. So there are Defamers who carry tales to break peace among dear Friends and Relations. They do go to one, and report such, or such a fault, of such a one, unto his Friend or Relation, and endeavour to raise some hard thoughts in him of his Friend or Relation, and so on, until they have made Friends become Foes, and Relations Enemies one to another. These are the persons of whom *Jeremy* speaks, *Jer. 6. 27.* saith he, *They are all grievous Revolters, walking with slanders* :

iders : Though God expressly forbids them to do so, *Levit. 19. 16. Thou shalt not go up and down as a Tale-bearer* : Yet in spite of God and his Authority, they will do so. And very assiduous and diligent they will be in their cursed work, whatever the issue be, or whatever God saies against them; they will not cease to serve the Devil and their own and others Lusts; for they are Enemies to peace, as their Father the Devil is; and they love not to see Friends and Relations to live in love and peace by them.

God hath every where commanded all men upon pain of death, not only to live in peace, and to avoyd all peace-breaking; but also *to follow peace with all men*, *Heb. 12. 14. Psal. 34. 14. 1 Pet. 3. 11. Mark 9. 50.* And God assures us, *that all peace-breaking comes from Lusts, and the Devil*, *Gal. 5. 19, 20, 21. Jam. 3. 14, 15, 16. Jam. 4. 1, 2. and that such shall be shut out of Heaven, and are accursed.* Yet notwithstanding, these wretched men will with their envious hearts and tatling tongues, kindle flames of strife and contention,

mention, in all Societies, in Families,
 Churches, Corporations, and Neighbour-
 hoods: yea, they cannot sleep, nor be at
 rest at home in their own spirits, until
 they have made some to fall, Prov. 4. 16.
 And this they do by raising, and some-
 thing of jealousy and suspicions of one a-
 nother, and so prejudice the minds, and
 stir the passions and affections against one
 another; from whence proceed smart and
 bitter words from one to another, until
 the whole house be in a flame, and near
 consuming. And herein I speak what I
 do know, and testifie what I have seen, and
 sadly experienced. God is the God of
 Peace, Phil. 4. 9. 1 Thes. 5. 23. and
 Christ is the Prince of Peace, Isa. 9. 6. And
 he hath charged every man to live in Peace,
 to follow Peace, Rom. 13. 18. Oh! then
 how great, how pernicious, and hainous
 sinners are peace-breakers? O, how hate-
 ful are they to God, Angels and men! O,
 how many can sadly lament and say, Oh
 what a sad distracted life have I lived with
 my Family, Friends, and Neighbours,
 since these cursed Tale-bearers, and wick-
 ed

ed *Make-bates* came amongst them ?
 Oh, what a happy, sweet, and peaceable
 life did I live before ! but since it hath
 been turned into gall and wormwood,
 into strife and contention, into wrath,
 debate, and confusion, I cannot now live
 in peace night nor day with them. They
 are so possessed and filled with *jealousie*
and suspicion of me ; with prejudice and
 wrath against me, that I cannot have any
 peace or friendship with them ; *but when*
I am for Peace, they are for War, as David
complains, Psal. 120. 5, 6, 7. Peace-brea-
 kers (as all back-biting Defamers are,) are the *plagues of mankind*. They are the
 greatest plagues in a Nation, Family,
 Corporation, Neighbourhood, and in a
 Church ; *for they carry about the breath of*
the Devil, and Hell-fire in their mouths,
to kindle flames of discord, strife, and con-
tention amongst men. So that if men labour
 and do all they can to live and enjoy
 peace with their Friends, and Relations,
 and give them no offence ; but labour to
 enjoy their peace, and keep up friendship,
 they labour in vaine, they cannot obtain
 it.

le : For these Enemies have already so strongly possess'd their fancies, corrupted their minds, and estranged their affections, as that it is impossible for them to restore them to their right wits again. *Oh, horrid wickedness ! Oh, Prodigious villany ! Oh, monsters of men !* great is the wickedness of such as disturb the peace of Neighbours, and Friends ; of Masters and Servants ; but much greater is the wickedness of those who disturb and break the peace of *Husbands and Wives*, by raising jealousies and suspicions of one another. These wicked persons are Enemies to the Publick and Common-wealth : for saith *Lyra*, *peccat non solum contra proximum, sed contra publicam Justitiam bonum* ; he sinneth not only against his Neighbour, but against the good of publick Justice. And indeed a peace-breaking Defamer, is a common publick Enemy to man-kind ; and so are all such as give heed to, and countenance his defamations.

Sixthly, *As these Monsters are peace-breakers, so they are also love-breakers ;*
They

They do by their defaming Tales, break the bond of Perfection, Col. 3. 14. Yea, they do not only break Love among Neighbours, Friends, and Relations; but they do also with their fiery tongues, raise, and foment hatred in their hearts against one another, even among those who were knit together in the bond of Love. So, strong and vehement is the venomous breath and the poysonous tongue of a defaming Tale-bearer, as that he can with the same, blow out Love, and kindle Hatred in the hearts of near Relations at the same time, and with the same blasts. For the Devil and their own wicked hearts tell them, that they need do no more to effect both, than to render them vile one to another, and to raise jealousie and suspicion in their hearts against, or of one another, and the work is done. And saies the Devil to them, (who is alwaies with them in the work) I will by my wiles and suggestions, keep the fire of jealousie and hatred a burning in them: I will see that it shall never go out when once you have kindled it: I will watch

watch it night and day ; and when I see
 it begin to go out, I will blow the coals,
 and strengthen the flames, both by my
 own mouth , and by my Agents ; and
 I question not but to keep them well e-
 nough, from ever having, or entertaining
 a good opinion of one another any more ; and
 if so, then the work is done. For saith
 the Devil, I will not fail to possess their
 fancies, and perswade them that all that
 they do hear, is true of them : that they do
 not love, nor regard one another ; that they
 may not trust, or acquiesc in one another,
 nor expect any love one from another. I
 will so work on their fancies, and imagina-
 tions, as that they shall seldome or never
 think or speak well one of another ; nor put
 a charitable construction upon any thing
 they shall say or do ; but they shall still
 take all in the worst sense imaginable. Yea,
 further, if they do not, or cannot see or find
 any fault or miscarriage in each other, ei-
 ther in word or deed, which they may take
 bold of, to strengthen and inflame their jea-
 lousie and hatred ; then I will put them up
 on imagining and furnishing, that it may
 be,

be, it is so, and so ; yea it is very probable it is as they think ; and although they see nothing spoken or done, whereby they may fasten any guilt upon them, yet it may be they are naught behind the door ; and whatever their words and carriages be before them, yet love them, they do not, but slight and hate them they do ; and all their seeming expressions of love and respect to them, are but the fruits of hatred or hypocrisie. Thus the Devil, their Father, carries on, and maintains the work they have begun, in breaking love ; kindling and raising hatred ; so that now their comfortable Sun-shine of love, is turned into the fire of Hell ; their sweet delight in each other, into bitterness ; and their pleasant communion into sorrow and grief ; their trust and confidence in each other, into cursed wrath and jealousies, and their honey into gall and wormwood ; the Seeds of which will probably never be rooted out any more. Notable is that saying of Seneca , *Horum sermo nocet multum, & licet non statim prodit, semina relinquit in animo, & sequitur:*
 Much

Much hurt doth their speaking bring ;
 and though it appear not presently, it
 leaveth seeds in the mind, it followeth af-
 terwards. Yea further saith he, *diutius*
haeret quàm auditur ; & *durat*, & *interval-*
lo recurrit, it stays longer than it is heard ;
 it abideth and maketh recourse, though it
 go away.

These back-biting Revilers, are they
 who set their mouths against the Heavens,
 and whose tongue walketh through the
 Earth, Psal. 73. 9. For the holy God
 hath strictly charged and commanded all
 men to love one another as men ; Friends
 as Friends, Relations as Relations, and
 Saints as Saints, *Math* 5. 43. 44. *Math*.
 19. 19. *Joh*. 13. 34. 1 *Pet*. 1. 22. *Eph*. 5.
 33. *Tit*. 2. 4. And as this is their indis-
 pensible duty to one another, so thereby
 they do resemble, and are like God,
Math. 5. 44, 45. And such as do not
 conform to, and obey him therein, are
 men of his wrath and indignation ; for
 they are haters of God himself, who love
 not Men, especially Relations, and good
 men, 1 *Joh*. 4. 20, 21. *Joh*. 15. 23. Now,

if they who love not others, as hath been said, are haters of God, and hated of God; and if he who loveth not, but hateth his Brother, be a *Murderer*, 1 *Joh.* 3. 15. then how hateful are such to God, and what *foul and horrid Murderers* are they in the sight of God, who with their venomous tongues, do all they can to break Love, to divide the heart & affections of Lovers; and cause them who lived together in sweet love, to hate one another by their back-biting, tatling and defaming tongues? These Monsters set their mouths against the Heavens, and bid defiance to the Laws and Lordship of Jesus Christ; like *Julian the Apostate*, who (as 'tis said) when he was wounded, took his blood, and threw it up into the air, in defiance of the *Lord Jesus*. So these wretches, though they know they do sin with a high hand against Christ, and his known Laws, yet they will act thus villainously against him, and his Laws, by back-biting and defaming, by reproaching and reviling their Brethren; and thereby cause burning wrath, and hatred in them,
against

against each other. Thus *Doeg* stirred up *Saul's* hatred against poor *David*. Thus did *Ziba* stir up *David's* hatred against *Mephibosheth*. Thus the Jews stirred up *Zedekiah* and the Princes hatred against *Jeremy*; and the false *Apostles*, thus stirred up the peoples hatred against *Paul*, 1 *Sam* 22. 2 *Sam*. 16. *Jer*. 18. *Rom*. 3. *Phil*. 1. All of them did it by slander-
ing and defaming these blessed Servants of God; that so they might make them vile and hateful unto them.

God hath appointed Love among men to be the great *bond and ligament* of human society, to keep them from wrong-
ing and hurting one another; and to draw and incline them to mutual designs and endeavours to promote and carry on the good, profit, and benefit one of another; and each member of the Society, the good of the whole. All which he hath commanded, and enforced, with *Laws* of his own; and hath given men wisdom, prudence, and opportunities to exert and exercise, to express and declare it; with *Consciences* to egg them on to do their
L 2 duty

duty, and improve their opportunities. But these *vile Monsters*, with their defiling and reviling tongues, do extinguish and root out this Love, and place Hatred in the room of it one to another; and so bring in all *mischief, confusion, and every evil work amongst them*; so that every mans hand is against his Brother; and Neighbours are made hateful one to another, and tempted to hate one another, as Enemies to each other. Now I do appeal to any sober and prudent person in the world, whether these *defamers and backbiters* are not a most hateful, vile, and a loathsome Generation? whether they are not the very *scum of the world, the Monsters of men, the greatest of Sinners, and Devils incarnate*? whether they are not rightly named by the holy God, *Lyons, Serpents, Dogs, Asps, Adders, Dragons, fire of Hell, and Devils*? For what sort of sinners else in the world are there like them, so wicked and cruel, and pernicious to mankind as these are? what sort of men are there in the world, that are such Plagues to private Families,
and

and publick societies as they are ? that are such *Thorns and Bryers* as they are ? yea, in some sense they are worse, and more mischievous to humane societies, than the Devil himself; not in their will, but in their practice and success. For the Devil himself, of, and by himself, cannot do so much mischief, as these men do (as was shewed before). These men would not have any to love such, as they do not love; and they would have all men to envy and hate such as they do. *And therefore they will first endeavour to make them vile, hateful, and loathsome, whom they would have hated, to them, whom they would have to hate them.* Secondly, They will labour to excite and stir up their hatred against them, by possessing their fancies and conceits that such men do hate them; and by raising jealousy and suspicion in them; causing them to think that it is so indeed, when there is no such matter ? And Oh ! what cruel irreconcilable malice and hatred do they stir in men, yea, in nearest Relations one against another thereby; that it is lamentable

table to behold. *Oh ! what heart-burnings, envyings, contentions, strifes, debates, judgments, censurings, and bitter railings,* do they hereby occasion ; causing such to look on, and account each other, as so many *Bedlams and frightful Ghosts ;* and tempting them in all places, and before all persons, to think, and speak the worst of one another, that possibly they can. *Oh !* how will God break them one day, in his fiery indignation, who have with their wicked tongues, endeavoured to break his bonds of Love and Peace amongst men. But I hasten.

Seventhly : *Back-biting defamers, do with their cursed Charms, break, and hinder that sweet, pleasant, harmonious, and profitable Communion, that men, especially Saints and Relations should have one with another.* Man is a sociable Creature, and cannot well, nor comfortably live in the world without free converse and communion with his fellow Creatures, that are of the same make and capacity ; the neglect whereof makes men fall short of *birds and beasts.* For we see that birds
of

of the *same feather* will flock together, and beasts of the same kind, will keep company together, though they cannot communicate one to another, as man can. It is the will of God that men should have free, pleasant, and profitable fellowship and communion one with another, in, and about the things of this life; but especially good men, and near Relations; hence saies God in *Gen. 2. 18.* *It is not good for man to be alone; I will make him a help meet for him,* one fit and capable of conversing with him, and to have and hold communion with him. But now these wicked tongues hinder and obstruct it, by making them vile in one anothers eyes; and raising *suspitions and distrusts* of one another; so that they look shie on each other, and desire not, nor delight in each others company. For, saies the Prophet *Amos, chap. 3. 3.* *Can two walk together except they be agreed?* So these, who were agreed and could walk, converse, and hold communion together before these *Adders* came amongst them; cannot, yea, they have no hearts to do it now, because

they have other thoughts and apprehensions of one another than they had. For it is certain, that, as some men are ready to defame and revile, so there are as many, who are as ready to receive and entertain what is spoken to them, as the Defamers are to speak it ; and therefore are every jot as bad as the Defamers are, and they shall be *shut out of Heaven*, as much as the other, *Psal. 15*. For, are not such as receive and entertain Thieves, and Stollen goods, as bad as they that stole them ? God hath appointed men to live one with, and one by another ; to be comfortable and profitable one to another ; and that they should hold communion together without fear or diffidence one of another ; and many, and great are the advantages that would accrue to humane life thereby, as all men know. But especially, there should be intimate and friendly communion between, and among good men, and near Relations. For, without it, they cannot profit one another, nor perform their respective duties to each others souls or bodies. They should
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have, and hold spiritual as well as bodily communion. They ought to have *communion of hearts and mouths in the worship and service of God together*, Rom. 15. 6. without which, *their performances will not be accepted in Heaven*, Math. 18. 19. 1 Pet. 3. 17. But these wretched Make-bates, do estrange and divide hearts; they break union and communion in Families, and Churches; so that when they worship God together, it is not with communion of hearts; they do not with one heart, and one mouth-do it: For the heart of the *Wife* is divided from the *Husband*; the *Childs* heart from the *Father*, and the *Servants* heart from his *Master*; one *Church-members* heart from another, and one *Brothers* heart from another. So that God is rather mocked than worshipped; his Name rather prophaned than sanctified by them. For they have no delight in one another, neither do they desire the company of one another, neither are they free to walk, or worship God together; neither would they at any time do it, did they know how to avoyd it.

Thus a *Makebate* separateth chief friends, and all free, profitable, chearful, and heart-satisfied communion, by the burning coals of his lips, *Prov.* 16. 27, 38. What (say they)? will you make, or account such, and such persons your Friends, and hold communion with them? Why, we have heard such, and such things, such miscarriages of them, and therefore you should not keep them company. Away with them, have no more to do with them, they are not fit companions for you. You will disgrace and dishonour your selves by keeping friendship and communion with them; for they are but a company of *dissemblers*, and they will deceive you, as *Joab* told *David*, that honest *Abner* came to have converse with *David*, but to search out his Counsels, and play the *Traytor* with him, *2 Sam.* 3. 25. He spake evil of him to *David*, and endeavoured to hinder his converse and communion with him, because he hated and envied *Abner*, and was jealous that he might in time stand in his light; therefore he labours to render him odious and contemptible.

able to David; though *Solomon* tells us that *Abner* was an *honest*, and a better man than *Joab*, 1 King. 2. 32. These foul-mouth'd back-biting *Joabs*, that I am discoursing of, are very expert in *Joabs* cursed art, but more successful than he was; for though *David* hearkened to *Ziba*, yet he would not to *Joab*. But as God in the end met with *Joab*, so he will with them, who practise the same wickedness now, and break the communion of Neighbours, Friends, and Relations; though they seem now to be in sport.

Eighthly, The horrid wickedness, and prodigious nature of this sin, lies in this; that it hinders and obstructs all acts of Charity, both in judgment and acts. For, when once defaming Back-biters have possessed and prejudiced the minds and fancies of men against the defamed persons, they will not pass a charitable judgment on their persons, nor any of their words or deeds; nor yet afford them any good words, nor do any office of love, or charitable work for them. For by this means they are become vile,
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and hateful to them; yea, they are now ready prepared to think and speak disdainfully, and vilifyingly of them to others also; and although these defamed persons stand in never so much need of their Charity, yet they shall go without it; and, instead thereof, they shall be snipt and snub'd, judg'd and censured, reviled and defamed, slighted and contemned, & be denyed all charity & kindness: For these Back-biting mischief-makers, have alienated their hearts from them, & prejudiced their spirits against them, & so have made their Friends, their bitter Enemies.

Thus they hinder some from doing good, and others from receiving good. And oh, what evil, and sin do they cause, and horrid mischief do they do thereby? Oh, how exceeding great is their sin, and how great shall be their punishment? *For if they shall have judgment without mercy, who shew not mercy to men, Jam. 2, 13. how great shall be their judgment, and punishment, who with their wicked tongues, do hinder others from shewing mercy to such as need it? God hath commanded,*

manded and strictly charged all men, as they have opportunity and ability, to do good unto all men, Gal. 6. 10. and that they do good, be ready to distribute, willing to communicate, 1 Tim. 6. 17, 18. So in 1 Pet. 4. 9, 10. And, As God doth every where in Scripture command men to be charitable, to objects of charity; so he highly commends it, 1 Cor. 13. and promiseth, greatly and largely to reward it, Heb. 6. 10. Math. 25. So also God hath threatned all such as neglect this work and duty, with everlasting flames of wrath, Math. 25. 41. 46. Now these men do by their evil tongues as it were forbid men to obey and do the will of God, and so cause them to sin against God and men. And as by their so doing, they do provoke God to curse them, Math. 25. 41. Dent. 27. 24. so they do provoke men to curse them also.

Ninthly, These men do by their backbiting and defaming, *sadden and grieve, trouble and vex, the hearts of such as they speak evil of.* They grieve the hearts of such, as God would not have grieved, and
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sadden the spirits of such as God would not have saddened, Ezek. 13. 22. Because with lies ye have made the heart of the Righteous sad, whom I have not made sad. They do not grieve them by eating, or doing indifferent things before them, which they think not lawful, Rom. 14. as some did there; no, but by speaking that, and in such a way of them, as they know to be sinful and offensive in its own nature, and cannot but wrong and grieve them. For as *Achan* did by his Rebellion against God, his Law, and Authority, trouble the Camp of Israel, Josh. 7. 25. so do these *Defamers* trouble and grieve the hearts of men by apparent, positive; and moral wickedness; for they do know that such defaming words are *forbidden-fruit*; and that if it did not sadden and grieve men, they ought not to do it. But now when they do sadden and grieve their hearts by wicked and sinful words, by defaming and abusing them; by robbing them of, and murdering of their jewels and darlings; surely their sin is very great and grievous. And if they are
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good and righteous men, who are abused and grieved by them, the Lord Jesus Christ himself is also abused and grieved.

For what - ever wrong or injury is done to them, the Lord Jesus takes as done to himself, Isa. 63. 9. Acts 9. 4, 5. Zach. 2. 8.

And it will be no *valid excuse*, to say, that they did not own them, or look on them as Saints, and related to Christ as such; for if they are so, and Jesus Christ accounts them so, their guilt shall be never the less, nor their punishment neither; for they will be found in the judgment of the Lord Jesus to be *Ravishers and Defilers of his Spouse*. And certainly, it cannot but greatly sadden and grieve their very hearts and souls, to have their pretious names to be defamed and reproached; to be ravished and defiled by back-biting poysonous tongues. Such as do grieve them, are said to destroy them, *Rom. 14. 15. But if thy Brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkest thou not Charitably; destroy not him with thy meat for whom Christ died. But back-biting defamers do not destroy their*
Friends

Friends and Brethren with their eating of meat, but with their sinful and wicked tongues. Wo be to those who grieve such as Christ would not have grieved; who grieve Jesus Christ in, and through them, whom he loves. See what Jesus Christ saith of such, *Math. 18. 6, 7.* *But who so shall offend one of these little ones, which believe in me, it were better for him that a milstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the midst or depth of the Sea.* Wo unto the world, because of offences, for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh: And a thousand woes to you, who by your envious, hateful, and defaming tongues, do offend and grieve such as are near and dear to Christ; such as are to him as the apple of his eye, and as a signet on his right hand. And to conclude, let all such know, that (without Repentance) all their griefs, and all the sighs and sorrows which they have caused, and laid upon them, will rise up in Judgment against them; and then they shall receive the dismal woes which are
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now pronounced against them ; for then will the righteous God *render to every one according to his works*, Rev. 2. 23. Isa. 3. 11. Rom. 14.

Tenthly, These men do by their backbiting and defaming tongues, *incapacitate men for, and blast their opportunities of doing good in the world to men*, so that when they would do good, they cannot, because their service will not be accepted. For these wicked defamers have so prejudiced their hearts against them, and render'd them so vile & odious unto them, as that their services (how useful soever they might have been to them, had they not been defamed) will by no means be accepted or regarded ; and all because these defamers by their poysonous tongues have prejudiced their minds against them, and alienated their hearts from them. And having once made them hateful unto men, they will quickly be perswaded to hate, and reject their best works, their gifts and graces too. *If they are holy men, able Ministers of the Gospel, and such as the blessed God hath*
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evidently called to the work, and eminently owned and blessed in the work of preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ, to the converting and establishing; to the sanctifying, and comforting of many souls; to the forming of them into Churches, and setting up the order and discipline of Christ amongst them; walking exemplarily and holily before them, and witnessing with many hardships and sufferings (from men) to the blessed truths and waies of Jesus Christ: Yet, I say, they shall be hated (I mean their persons); and their preaching, and all other services, loathed and rejected; because they are defamed and reproached by the wicked tongues of such as hate and envy them; and their persons looked on as vile and contemptible by many men, as if they were good for nothing, but to be cast out on the dunghil; not only as unsavory salt, but as filthy off-scouring; though God who knows their hearts and ways, hath chosen and sent them, hath blest and prospered them in his work, and made them gloriously instrumental in his service, to the enlargement

ment of his Kingdome. And notwithstanding God hath hedg'd up the way of defamers of his *Ministers*, and fenced them against the slanderous and back-biting tongues of all men, *1 Tim. 5. 19.* *Against an Elder receive not an accusation, but before [or under] two or three Witnesses:* Yet I say, they, who hate and envy them, will defame and revile, back-bite and slander them; and others will receive and spread what is told them, without so much *as the testimony of one indifferent and impartial Witness*; although they do thereby utterly spoyle and ruine their Ministry, and rebel against God; yea, and damn their own souls by their so doing.

Now a greater wrong and injury they cannot do, to holy and publick-spirited men, than to rob them of, and blast their opportunities of honouring God, and serving Men in their generations. For such men do not account their lives worth the keeping, unless they are fruitful and profitable. *They had rather dye (if God see it good) than be useles and barren, than to live and spend the Lords mercies, and*

cumber the ground. There is nothing more grievous to them in the world, than to live such Swinish lives as most men (yea and professors too) do live, who are either altogether idle, or, if laborious, they bring forth fruit unto themselves, not to honour God, and profit others, as they *Hos. 10. 1.* But now the greatest aim, delight, choice, and endeavour of holy publique-spirited men, is, to please, and honour God; and to serve, and profit, especially the souls of men, as *forty instances* might be given in Scripture of *Paul*, and other holy men. But when once these holy, and publick-spirited men are defamed, they have (if God do not wonderfully appear for them, and prevent the ends of Defamers) lost their blessed and desirable opportunities to serve God, and profit men. *Publique-spirited David* had a design, and an opportunity (as he thought) when he was King, to shew kindness, and to do good to *Hanun* King of the *Ammonites*, 2 Sam. 10. 1, 2, 3. which he would have improved, but that *David* was hindred from doing, and *Ha-*

hanun was hindred from receiving the good that *David* would have done to him, by back-biting, defaming Courtiers, as you may read in *ver. 3.* For they raised an evil report to *Hanun* of *David* and his Servants, and made *Hanun* jealous and suspicious of them; and so prejudiced his mind against them, as that, when kindness was offered him, he would not accept of it. Just so do Defamers do to, and deal with, men now; they do all they can to tye up good mens hands from doing good to the souls of men, so that they may complain of them as *Paul* did of such men, *1 Cor. 16. 9.* For a great door, and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many Adversaries.

Oh ! how great is their sin, and how dreadful shall be their punishment, who do with their defaming tongues, hinder, and obstruct, discourage and weaken the hearts and hands of Gods people, especially his *Ministers* in their work, in serving God and the souls of men; who hinder, and obstruct the free passage and acceptance of the Gospel amongst men; and
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who labour to make such *barren*, as God hath commanded to be fruitful; and undoubtedly as these wretches do therein the *Devils* work, who labours to hinder the Gospel, the profit and salvation of Souls; so they shall in due time reap, and receive his reward.

And as these back-biting Defamers do rob good men of their blessed opportunities to do good, so they do rob others of opportunities of receiving good also, and thereby they do greatly wrong their souls. For, Experience tells us, that men once entertaining an evil report against a good man, will never after accept of his endeavours, to do good to their souls; yea, although they had high thoughts of him, but a little before they heard him defamed, and could freely have yielded up themselves to their *Ministerial* guidance; and they might probably have found much profit and good, in, and by attending on their Ministry: yet now all is blasted. They will not so much as hear such preach, nor are they willing that others should hear them neither.

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Eleventhly, These Defamers do endeavour to harden the hearts of such as they do defame, and to make them desperate in sinning. For when men see that they have been robb'd of their good-names and reputations amongst men; and for ought they know, they may never regain them; they are thereby exceedingly tempted to desperate courses; and if they have already sinned, they are now under a new temptation to sin more and more. For one great argument of encouragement to perswade and draw them to Repentance, is taken from them by their *Reproaches*; namely, their hope of holding and keeping their honour and reputations amongst men; and so despairing of that, they are now (if God prevent not) in the high way of being hardened in sin. For so long as men are perswaded, or can live in hope, that, although they have sinned, yet that upon repentance they shall lose nothing which is dear to them (by their sinning); neither the love and favour of God, nor respect and honour from men; they are greatly encouraged

couraged to repent, turn to God from whom they have departed, and to give all reasonable satisfaction to men whom they have offended. But now on the other hand, when they see themselves deprived of one of *their greatest comforts and richest jewels*, they are ready to say with those in *Jer. 2. 25. but thou said'st there is no hope; no, (what followed) for I have loved strangers, and after them will I go,* So when *Absolom* saw that he could not be admitted into his Father's presence, and that *Joab* refused to come to him; he was more desperate than before, and sets *Joab's Corn on fire*, 2 Sam. 14. 29, 30.

Men cannot bear to be slighted, despised, and contemned of their fellow-Creatures; and I know no way so probable and powerful to harden mens hearts, and make them desperate in sinning as this is. When *Hanun*, & the *Ammonites* thought that they had made themselves odious to *David*, 2 Sam. 10. 6. they grew desperate: So when men see that they are loathed and despised of men, and made vile and hateful to men, then, (together with

with the Devil) they do either sink under despair, or plot and contrive how they may be revenged on such as have defamed them ; *by rendring evil for evil, and reviling for reviling*, as the Apostle speaks, 1 Pet. 3. 9. *And so running on from one sin to another, until they have cast themselves under such horrid guilt, and hardness of heart, as that they are in a far more miserable and hopeless condition than they were before ; and so not knowing what to do, they (with the Devil's help) betake themselves to the pleasures of sin, and of the world ; and instead of repenting for what is past, they persist, and add sin to sin, occasioned by the irreparable loss of their good names, which have been extorted from them by wicked tongues ; and so they are guilty of destroying and damning the souls of such, as for whom Christ died, Rom. 14. 15. And so they are not only, the accused murderers of their good names, which are dearer to them than their natural lives (as I shewed before) but they are murderers of their souls too ; yea, and that of such, for whom*

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the Lord of glory shed his pretious blood.
 For although it is certain, that not any
 soul for whom Christ died with an inten-
 tion to save, *shall ever perish*, Joh. 6.
 Job. 10. Job. 17. Tit. 2 : Yet when ever
 we do cause such to sin against God, we
 do thereby put them into the way of dam-
 nation, Rom. 6. 22. Heb. 12. 14. 1 Cor.
 6. 9, 10. and tempt them to think, speak,
 and do, that which would inevitably
 damn them. were it not for the decree of
 Heaven, the Covenant of Grace, the
 blood of Christ, and the unchangeable
 love of God to them. But that they are
 not damned by our means, is no thanks to
 us ; for by our causing them to sin, and
 harden their hearts, obey the Devil, and
 dishonour God ; *we have exposed them to*
the everlasting wrath of the great God ;
as much, as if God should damn them for it,
 although he will not do so. Yet I say we
 are never a whit the less guilty of damn-
 ing them, because we have made, or
 tempted them (at least) to do that which
 would damn them, did not Christ pre-
 vent it. As suppose I should take a man,
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and throw him into some deep pit of water, from whence he cannot deliver himself; but when I have thrown him in, some men should come and deliver him, and save his life, as *Judah* and *Reubin* did *Joseph*, Gen. 37. Am I not as really a *Murderer*, as if the man had perished in the pit; in that, I threw him into a perishable condition, where he must unavoidably have perished, had not some friend delivered him out of his great danger? why, this is the case of the defamers, and defamed; the defamers do throw the defamed into the pits of sin, by tempting them to sin, and by hardning their hearts against Repentance (as hath been shewed) and there they do leave them in a perishing and hopeless condition, where they would undoubtedly perish, did not the Lord Jesus help them out.

Now there are many sins which men are tempted to commit by defaming back-biting tongues; I shall mention some of them. First, They stir up the Lusts of hatred, pride, and envy, anger, wrath, or boiling choler, malice, and malignity in those

whom they defame, tempt and prompt them to hate them; and to carry about a great deal of spite, malice, envy, wrath, and venome in their minds against them. They have stirred up those *roaring and devouring Lyons* against themselves; others have raised those horrible tempests in their souls, which neither men nor Angels can calme, or cause to cease. For these *Cursed defamers* have made (by their grievous temptations) such to hate, as would not have hated; to be malicious, who would not else have been malicious; to sin so, as otherwise they would not have sinned. They have strengthened, stirred up, and moved their Lusts to act, which else would not have done so; and so, with the *Scribes and Pharisees*, they make the defamed twofold more the *Children of Hell* than themselves, Math. 23. For by this means, they do cause them to fight and rebel against God; for, God hath expressly forbidden them to sin and let loose their Lusts, *Psal. 4. and commanded them to mortifie, and destroy them*, Col. 3. 5. Rom. 8. 13. and we are charged to help
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one another in this work, and provoke one another to Love, and to good works, Heb. 10. 24. But now when men shall tempt one another to sin, they do thereby bid them raise up, and rebel against God.

Secondly, They do stir up, and inflame thoughts, and intentions to revenge themselves on such as have defamed them, and to 'avenge themselves with their own hands and tongues; as *David* did intend to have done, when *Nabal* defamed him, 1 *Sam.* 25. and thereby tempted him to revenge himself on him, which accordingly he did, so far as he could. I say by defaming men, we do tempt them to execute vengeance on us with their own hands, contrary to the express will of God, *Rom.* 12. 19, 20, 21. 1 *Pet.* 3. 9. *Heb.* 10. 30. And by their so doing, do throw themselves into the hand of the living God. For they being infinitely provoked by their defamer's tongues, they cannot without much grace, and the help of the Spirit, refrain, or restrain themselves from retaliating, and returning railing for railing, defaming for de-

faming; although God hath forbidden them to do so, *Prov. 20. 22. Say not thou, I will recompence evil, but wait on the Lord, and he shall save thee.* And experience shews that the best of men know how hard a matter it is to bridle Lusts when they are stirred, heighthned, and inflamed by such contemptuous and horrid abuses from men. Men can more easily bear a thousand stroaks from the immediate hand of God, than one from the hands or tongues of men; especially if they are their equals, or inferiours.

Thirdly, As they stir up, strengthen, inflame, and draw forth abundance of the lusts of mens hearts, quicken and move them to revenge; *so they do grievously tempt them to omit and neglect their duties to God and men;* and herein they do act like the Devil, and go hand in hand with him, in driving and carrying on his designs, namely, *to rob Christ of his due honour from his Creatures, and they of the profit they might receive from him in the seiled and well performance of them.* For such is the force and power of a defaming tongue

tongue on the minds of persons defamed, or that it doth unexpressibly distract, divide, and discompose their hearts; and render them altogether incapable and unfit for Meditation, Prayer, or any other Duty. So that if they would perform them as God requires, and as they have done; so, as to honour, and please God: yet they cannot, because of the grief and trouble that is in their minds, which they have received from their defamers; so that now they cannot bring forth their graces to act in duties, without which duties are not accepted in Heaven; partly through, or from the distraction and trouble of their minds; and partly from guilt that is on their Consciences; and partly from fears that God will not hear, nor accept them; because they know, *that they must worship him without wrath and doubting, and with a spirit reconciled to men, 1 Tim. 2. 8. Math. 5. 23, 24.* all which they know (as the case it stands with them) they cannot do. But what experience teaches all men, I need not speak much, as in this case it doth. Therefore.

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Fourthly, *They do by their defaming, greatly tempt, and provoke the defamed to wish, desire ; yea, and rejoyce in the falls, sins, and miseries of them, expressly contrary to the will of God, Prov. 24. 17. Rejoyce not when thine Enemy falleth, and let not thy heart be glad when he stumbleth.* For when men lie under the burden of Reproach, and feel the grief and smart of defaming and reproaching tongues, which have robb'd them of their good names ; they can hardly contain themselves from desiring and wishing they might fall into sin and misery, who have so egregiously and villanously wronged them ; and when they fall, they are ready to rejoyce at it, though God be dishonoured thereby, and their own souls greatly wronged. But in case such as are defamed, do refrain from making such sinful improvements of their sufferings from them ; yet *the defamers do nevertheless tempt them so to do ;* and their sin, and guilt is not one *iota* the less for that ; for they have assaulted them with violent and strong temptations to do as hath been said.

said. And assuredly, such as tempt and provoke others to sin, are most horrid and prodigious sinners; and so are all such as rejoyce in their sins and miseries, and in causing them to sin, 1 King. 21. 25. Rom. 1. 32.

Fifthly, *They do (as was said) harden their hearts, and keep the persons they defame from repentance.* For by their defaming and reproaching them for their real sins, they do so deject, distract, discompose and divide their minds, and cause them to busie and exercise their thoughts about their sufferings, and the Authors of them, and so much hinder them of their hopes of regaining what they have lost, as that they cannot mind, nor seriously consider what they are to do, nor attend to their proper work; and so being in this sad and woful plight, by means of their wicked defamers, *they are far more disposed and prepared to sin more and more, than to repent, and to run further off from God rather than to return to him:* And oh! how great must their sin needs be, who cause others to sin, harden their hearts

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from repentance, and cause them to damn their souls; yet, thus defamers are guilty of, and much more as I could instance in, were it needful so to do; but I think I have said enough to evince what I said, and to convince all who are willing to see and be convinced of the horrid sinfulness of this sin; and that among other evils they do by their defaming, this is one, namely, they do tempt and provoke to sin such as they do defame, yea, and make them desperate in sinning, and harden them against repentance.

Twelfthly, *These wicked defamers do greatly tempt and provoke such to sin against God and men, to whom they do carry and vend their defamations of others.* For, by their reporting matters of reproach and slander to them of others, they do give them occasion to sin against God, and such as are defamed, and thereby they lay a snare, and spread a Net to catch the Souls of their Auditors in, and move them to transgress and commit iniquity likewise. For by their filling the ears and minds of such as hear them with their defamings,

defamings, they do give them occasions and opportunity to stir up their Lust^s of Pride, Malice, Hatred, Envy, Jealousy, Wrath, and Anger against them, and provoke them also.

First, To receive, accept, and entertain the Reproach that is cast on them by the Reporters, expressly against the will of God, *Psal.* 15. 3. *Exod.* 20. 16. *Exod.* 23. 1. For, (as was shewed before) men are exceeding apt and willing to receive and entertain evil reports of one another: yea, they are glad and rejoyce at the hearing of such stories of each other, as if they had found some great treasure. It is well known that such men and women who are very apt to be *offended at, & greatly to envy the praise of others*, are exceeding apt and prone to rejoyce at their hearing of the evil reports of others. But whether or no they will receive and entertain such reports, these wicked defamers will do all they can to possess them with their stories, and perswade them that they may, and ought to believe what they say against, or report of them, whom they desire should

should be reproached, that so they may mischief them, although they do ruine the Souls of their hearers by their so doing, *Psal. 15. 1. 3.*

Secondly, *They tempt them to hate such as are reproached.* For these defamers do endeavour to render them odious, hateful, and abominable unto them, that so they may (if possible) provoke them to *hate, and abhor them.* And the hearts of men are very apt, and exceeding prone to loath and abhor such as are defamed, especially if they are such as they had little or no esteem of before : Thus they do cast a stumbling block in the way of men, to stumble, fall, break their bones, wound their Consciences, dishonour God, grieve the spirit, and damn the souls of such as they carry their wicked defamations to : And oh, how great is their sin who tempt, and provoke others to sin, by laying snares and provocations in their way, and put an opportunity into their hands to sin if they will.

Now, if he be partaker of, and involved in the guilt of anothers sin ; who when
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he hath an opportunity so to do, will not hinder him from sinning, or recover and restore him when he knows he hath sinned, as appears he is *1 Tim. 5. 22. Gal. 6. 1, 2.* how much more is he guilty? and how much greater is his sin, who instigates, tempts, provokes, and intices another to sin, as most certainly all defamers, & reproachers do, and that more ways than I shall now mention. And if he is a *Murderer who hateth his Brother?* *1 Joh. 3. 15.* how much more is he a *Murderer*, who provokes, and tempts another to hate, loath, and abhor him, which all *Reproachers assuredly do?* God hath expressly forbidden men to hate others, *Levit. 19. 17.* but these men do greatly tempt and provoke them to hate, loath, and abhor such as they hear defamed by them.

Thirdly, As they do tempt their Auditors to hate the Reproached, so they do tempt and provoke them to spread the Reproach to others, and so to fall in with them, in their wickedness, and to do as they have done, and so these wicked defamers have
put

put a sword into their Neighbours hands to murder two at one blow ; namely, their own souls, and the good name of him whom they have reproached, and so have quickned, and stirred them up to rebel against God, and transgress his Royal Law (as hath been shewed before) ; and in so doing, they do sin with a high hand against the holy God, and provoke him to wrath and vengeance. For of all sinners they are assuredly the greatest who tempt and provoke others to sin ; and it is all one with respect to the Tempters, whether or no the tempted do so improve the temptation ; for the sin, and the greatness of it, lies in the Tempters laying of the temptation before him, and so provoking him to believe, receive, speak, and do as he would have him, although the tempted refuse so to do. Now it cannot be denyed, but that *Defamers or Reproachers* do intend in their reproaching of others, to make their hearers partakers with themselves in their wicked practice, and by carrying tales to them, aggravating and augmenting of some real sin

fin of another to them, they cannot but hope to obtain their desire by their endeavours. For what ends and designs can Reproachers have in their eye, in labouring to possess their hearers with reproaches? but to perswade them to believe, receive, and improve them to the wrong and ruine of the Reproached; and because Reproachers will not fail of obtaining their wicked ends, they do imploy, or at least endeavour to set others about their work, that so they may accomplish their designs upon the Reproached.

Fourthly, *These Reproachers and Defamers do tempt and provoke their hearers to rash, unlawful, and uncharitable judgments, and censurings of the Reproached, contrary to the expresse will of God, Math. 7. 1, 2. and they do thereby expose them to the judgments of God; for says the Text, Judge not, that ye be not judged; for with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged; and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. Now experience shews, that men (especially*

cially Women) are exceeding prone and apt to receive, and so to improve the reproaches they hear of others. Yea, *David* himself was once overtaken with this foul wickedness; for no sooner did a vile treacherous *Ziba* reproach *Mephibosheth* to *David*, but presently he censures and passes a rash, unjust, and uncharitable judgment on innocent *Mephibosheth*, never once examining the matter, nor wait for any defence from the reproofed; but *Ziba's* counterfeit coin was current money with *David*. *If a reviling, slandering, and lying Ziba do but say a Mephibosheth is a Traytor*, it must, without asking a question be granted, that he is guilty, & judgment must pass accordingly upon him; as a real *Traytor*, 2 Sam. 16. And although their hearers may be kept by the power and light of God, from improving the reproaches that are brought to them by these defamers, against the reproached, yet the Reproachers sin is never the less sinful, no thanks to them.

Fifthly, *They tempt and provoke their hearers, to withdraw, and keep from the persons*

reproached, all friendly and neighbourly communion, favours, helps, and kindneses, which they have, or are bound in duty to shew and afford them, as they have occasion & opportunity offered, which will one day be found to be no venial sin. For we are charged and commanded as we have opportunity to do good to all men, Gal. 6. 10. and to provoke one another to love and to good works, Heb. 10. 24. But these Reproachers are such enemies to good works, as that they do by their reviling tongues labour to tie up the hands, and shut up, and harden the hearts of men against their friends and neighbours, and to hinder them all they can from doing their duty. And experience shews us, that when men are once offended with, and prejudiced against men, they are thereby taken off from doing their duty to them, although it is their sin so to do: I say, it is their sin to make such uses of reproachers, that Reproachers do cast upon their Neighbours; but so it is, and Reproachers are the procurers of it, and the greatest weight of guilt will lye at their doors one day,

day, and the other shall not go unpunished. I could have enlarged every particular, and have added many more, but that my design is to be very brief, that so I may not weary the Reader.

I suppose, I have said enough to convince such as are willing to be convinced, that the sin of Reproaching, Defaming, or speaking Evil of one another, is a great and abominable sin, a God-provoking and Soul-damning sin, if there be any such sin in the world.

CHAP.

CHAP. V.

Wherein are declared some of the Aggravations of this sin.

THe sin treated of, as it is very great and abominable in its own nature, as hath been shewed ; So it is capable of many Aggravations. Some of them I shall name. Now this sin is aggravated and made more exceeding sinful by the Actors of it.

First, *If they are Professors of Christ, and of his holy and pure Gospel-institutions and appointments, and are such as do frequently attend and wait on them, separate themselves from the prophane and superstitious world, and profess to be lovers of, and delighters in the blessed Ordinances and people of Christ ; and it is known and observed of the prophane world, that they do so.*
Now

Now the very profession and separation of these men, do plainly and openly condemn their back-biting, defaming, traducing and reproaching of men. For, their profession and practice in these things, doth call them off from them, and clearly reprove all moral sins over and above their natural Consciences, although their accusations are sufficient (it may be) to restrain them from such deliberate and moral abominations. For none can practise this wickedness, but they must deliberate about the doing of it; as he who tells a lye, doth it with premeditation and deliberation; so he that Reproacheth, doth it with premeditation, & deliberation; & they must needs (unless they do wilfully shut their eyes) know it to be a sin. I say, these men do profess they know God and Jesus Christ, and do approve of the good waies of God, *but in works they do deny him to be their God,* Tit. 1. 16. For their profession, and some of their practices do declare, or they do declare to all men, that they are *no more debtors to the flesh, to live after the flesh,* Rom.

Rom. 8. 12. *and that they have put off the old man, with all the deceitful Lusts, Eph. 4. 22. and that they have escaped the pollutions of the world, 2 Pet. 2. 20. they are notwithstanding entangled again; in the practice of such an abomination as this, they do thereby make voyd the profession of holiness and righteousness; make it to stink abroad; and condemn themselves of hypocrisie and false-heartedness, and declare themselves to be but dissemblers with God and men. For, the Grace, or Gospel of God, which they do profess to love and obey, teaches them to deny all ungodly and worldly lusts (whereof this sin is one), Tit. 2. 11, 12. so that the sin is aggravated, when committed by great professors of the Gospel, under the pure Ordinances & waies of Jesus Christ.*

Secondly, *the sin is aggravated, If the Authours of it are wise and knowing men and women, persons wiser than their Brethren; for if they are indeed such men as they are supposed, and would be thought to be, they cannot but plainly know and be convinced that this is a foul and abomi-*

bominable sin, a God'-provoking and Soul-damning sin. Their Consciences cannot be still and silent, but will flie in their faces, and appear at the bar against them; *Indite* them before God, and bear witness against them. They will rebuke and reprove them, check and controul them. They will reply upon them, and say to them, Ho ! *Do not speak this abominable thing, that the Righteous and Holy God hates*, Jer. 44. 4. For as light stands in the way of a Thief, to hinder him in his designe, so doth light in a mans Conscience stand in the way of his reproaching; *and as the Angel of the Lord stood in Balaams way, with a drawn sword in his hand, to hinder him in, and turn him back from, cursing the people of God*, Numb. 22. 23 : So doth the light and consciences of these men stand, in their way of Cursing and Blaspheming others; with the sword of the spirit, to hinder and turn them back from their wicked designs against others good names.

Now if they shall with *Balaam* press forward, and cudgel, and spur their minds
on

on, to the work, *as Balaam did his Ass*, against their light and consciences ; Oh ! how great must their sin needs be. For it cannot be denied, but that one great work and end of Conscience in men, and of the light of God, and knowledg of sin, is to rebuke for, and restrain men from, sinning, *Rom. 2. 14, 15.* and that then their sin is very great, when they shall strive against their light and Consciences, break over these mounds and bounds ; and, like *Jehu*, *drive on furiously*, to smite the good names of men. To sin against knowledg and conscience, is to sin wilfully, and with a high hand indeed, *Rom. 1. 21. 24.*

Thirdly, *The sin is aggravated, when committed by Church-members.* I say, by *Church-members* ; by such as are members of a true Church of Christ, a Church of holy, and called men and women ; a Church of his planting and watering, which he hath chosen and set apart for himself to walk and delight in, *Rev. 2. 1.* A Church who have separated themselves from the world, and dedicated themselves

to God. For any of them to become *Blasphemers of men*, or *Reproachers* of their good names, certainly is very bad; for they do not sin simply, as in a private capacity; neither is their sin, a private personal sin, but a relative sin also; and it is, and will be so taken, and accounted, and the charge and reproach will lie against, and be imputed to the whole Church; - for the sin of one *Church member* doth in a sense lay the *Church* under guilt and reproach, *1 Cor. 5. 6.* Know ye not that a little *Leaven*, leaveneth the whole *Lump*, saies the Apostle to the *Church at Corinth*; his meaning is, that the sin of one of their members had brought the whole under guilt and shame: Oh! that *Church-members* would seriously weigh and ponder this matter: *What, shall Church-members be Revilers, Back-biters, Blasphemers, Reproachers, Defamers?* God forbid!

Fourthly, *This sin is greatly aggravated, when committed by publick persons, or persons in a publique Capacity, whether they be Magistrates or Ministers of the Word*
and

of God; for they (especially Ministers) are, or should be the *Lights of the world*, and the *Salt of the earth*, to guide and season others, *Matth. 5. 13, 14, 15, 16.* They are to be notable examples to others, *1 Tim. 4. 12.* Of all men on earth, they should have their light to shine before men, that they may see their good works, and be induced thereby to glorifie God, *Matth. 5. 16.* They must be examples in their flocks, *1 Pet. 5. 3.* and that in all good works as much as possible; it is one of their great works, and one of the great ends of their office and advancement, to guide others to Heaven with holy and righteous examples, and with shining Conversations, even such as others may safely follow. Now if they be found blaspheming, reviling, back-biting, defaming and reproaching of others, will they not thereby greatly induce and provoke others to do so likewise? will they not become stumbling Blocks, and Rocks of offence to others? yea doubtless, if a *Barnabas* was carryed away with the practical errors of *St. Peter*, and others, *Gal. 2. 11,*
N 12, 13.

12, 13. Certainly so will men be carried away from Righteousness now, by the evil examples of their Teachers, and be easily led into sin by them ; if they see them going before them in any iniquity. Yea, it is supposed that (their work being to converse with God, and his word more than others) they have clearer knowledge, and a quicker sense of sin than others have, & therefore their sin is so much the greater. And also by their reproaching, they do expose their Ministry to reproach; yea, tie up their own tongues from rebuking sin in others. There are not any persons in the world so much concerned to keep their tongues from evil, and their lips from speaking guile, as *Ministers* are upon many accounts.

Secondly, This sin is greatly aggravated and heightened also, *when men reproach and defame such persons as these.*

First, *Gracious and holy men*, such as in the general course of their lives, do walk holily, righteously, and unblameably before God and men, so far as men can see ; and such who have not only
 God

God, Angels, and their own Conscience^s witnessing for them, that they do indeed do so; but also they have many good men and women ready upon their own personal knowledg of them, and of their conversations, to testifie that their conversations are blameless, and such as becomes the Gospel of Christ. I say, whoever do reproach, back-bite, and defame such persons do sin with a high hand against God and them; and assuredly their sin is exceeding great. Yea, though they do know them sometimes to stumble, fall, and break their bones through the strength of their temptations, *Gal. 6. 1, 2.* For let it be considered that the best of men in this world have their imperfections; their Lusts within, and temptations without, to irritate and provoke those Lusts that are in their hearts; and that it is very seldome (if at all) that they do sin deliberately, resolvedly, or wilfully, either against God or men; but that when they do stumble and fall, it is through their own weakness, want of watchfulness, the strength and violence of temptations

rations that assault them; and contrary to their own habitual inclinations, choice, purposes, desires, and resolutions, their prayers and tears; and therefore though they may for, or by their falls, deserve reproofs, and stand in need of counsel and admonition, yet not of *Reproaches and defamations*. For if God do pity and pardon them under, and with a notwithstanding their sins, as he doth, *Psal. 103. 13. Isa. 55. 7. Jer. 31. 34.* then certainly we ought to do so too. If God doth love and honour them, with a notwithstanding their falls, as he doth, *Isa. 43. 4. 2 Sam. 1. 14, 15. Jer. 31. 3.* surely we should do so much more to our fellow Creatures. Is it not our great sin to reproach such as God hath honoured? To hate such as God hath loved, and will love to all eternity? To slight and despise the Lords pretious and excellent Jewels, because they do now and then (though rarely, though too often) dirt themselves and defile their garments? will any wise and serious man reproach his Jewels, his choyce, and peculiar treasure

sure, because they are let fall into the dirt and mire of the street? and if they will not, shall we dare to reproach the Lords excellent and rare Jewels, and peculiar treasure; because he may, or doth, now, and than, let them fall into the dirt of the world? God forbid. Yet, notwithstanding they are the Lords *pretious, excellent, and choyce Jewels*, Mal. 3. 17. *his redeemed and renowned ones*; how bold do their Neighbours and Acquaintance make with their good names? how do they rend and tear them, blaspheme and reproach them, yea, Brethren of the same profession and practice of Religion: Oh, how do they defame and back-bite one another; as if they did neither fear God, nor reverence man, nor believe any judgment to come? But they do sin greatly, and provoke the Lord to wrath against their own souls exceedingly, by their tongues, as they shall find one day, *when every mans work shall be made manifest, of what sort it is.*

It is a great sin to reproach any man, or to speak evil of him (excepting such

who in the general course and trade of their lives, do walk wickedly, and thereby proclaim their own shame to all men;) for we are charged *that we speak evil of no man*, Tit. 3. 2. Now if it be a great sin to speak evil of meer Carnal, worldly men, *than how much greater is their sin, who speak evil of, and defame gracious holy men?* such as God, hath honoured, exalted, and lifted up on high, such as in the general course of their lives do make it their work and business to honour and exalt God. For men to open their mouths in Blasphemy against the *Sponse of Christ*, the dearly Beloved of his Soul; his *Members*, his *Delight*, his *Sons and Daughters*, his *Kings and Priests*; such as are *Co-heirs of Heaven* with himself, and such as are as dear to him, and he is as tender of, as of the apple of his eye, and such as he himself came down from Heaven to honour and exalt. Oh! how great must their sin be, and how highly provoking are they in his sight? For such are all the people of God, although they do too often fall into sin, as
these

these Scriptures shew, *Eph. 5. 25. 30. 2 Cor. 11. 2. Jer. 12. 7. Psal. 16. 3. 2 Cor. 6. 18. Rev. 1. 6. Rom. 8. 17. Zach. 2. 8. 2 Cor. 12. 26.* Moreover, whoever reproacheth the people of God for their real sins, they do thereby reproach the Lord himself, for the reproach reacheth him. As he who reproacheth the Wife, reproacheth the Husband too, and he who reproacheth a member of the natural body, reproacheth the whole body; *for if one member suffer, or be honoured, the whole (says the Apostle) suffers, or is honoured with it, 1 Cor. 12. 26.* So that by virtue of the relations they stand in to Jesus Christ, the union they have with him, and the holy profession they make of him; Jesus Christ will say of all the *Reproaches and Infamies* that any do cast upon them, although they have sinned as the Apostle Paul did, *2 Cor. 11. 29. Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is reproached among my peculiar people, and I am not in them reproached; and as Christ speaks in Matth. 25. In as much as ye have done it to one of the least of these my*

Brethren, ye have done it unto me, and I am he whom thou persecutest, Acts 9. For whatsoever good or evil, any man doth to the Lords people, he takes it as done to himself, and will reward them as if they had done it to his own glorious person. For it cannot be, but that Jesus Christ is honoured in his peoples honour, and debased in his peoples debasement; the interest of the one, is the interest of the other, for the Lord Jesus and they are one, Joh. 17. Therefore great is the sin of such, who do back-bite, reproach, and speak evil of them.

Secondly, Their sin is exceeding great, who do defame and speak reproachfully of the sound, faithful, and laborious Ministers of Jesus Christ: I say the Ministers of Jesus Christ, such as he hath chosen, gifted, graced, and set apart for the work and service of his Gospel, house, and people; to declare his will to men, and to administer to his people his holy Ordinances; to feed them with the bread of Life, unto everlasting life, and to confirm and establish their hearts in the faith and practice of

of his will. To convert sinners, and marry them to Christ, 2 Cor. 11. 2. and to be their mouths to God, to stand between him and them, and to open the mysteries of his will to them, and their wants unto him, and continually to wait upon the service of their souls; *such as he hath promised to be with, and not to leave them, nor forsake them, Matth. 28. but to bless and prosper them; yea, and doth bless & prosper their Ministry,* and all their administrations in his name, according to his will, with great success, in converting, teaching, comforting, sanctifying, confirming and establishing of souls; so that many can call them *Fathers, Comforters, and Instructors in Christ,* 1 Cor. 4. 15. such as labour night and day to serve Christ, save souls, and to make full proof of their Ministry (as St. Paul speaks) I say, whoever shall *defame them, and speak reproachfully of them,* are most horrid and prodigious sinners against the Lord and them, and assuredly they shall not go unpunished. For, *such Ministers of Jesus Christ are sealed Ministers, sealed and*

confirmed in their Ministry by him, and by his people also, 1 Cor. 9. 1, 2. They stand in a double relation to Jesus Christ, namely, as *Believers*, and also as *Ministers*, and are called to, and imployed in the work of *Believers*, and the work of *Ministers* also; and so with respect unto their work and office, their concerns are more with Christ, and Christs with them; or they are more concerned with, and for Christ, and Christ with, and for them, than other *Believers* are. They have more work to do for God and men, than others have; and Christ expects more service and honour from them, than from others. They have much more of the *Image* of Christ stampt upon them, than other believers have; not only of his holiness, but of his *Authority and power* also; they are called to stand in Christs stead, and then to do the work that he did, when on earth, 2 Cor. 5. 20. hence saies Christ unto the 70 Disciples (not to the 12 only) which he sent to preach, Luk. 10. 1, 16, 17. *He that heareth you, heareth me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth me;*

me; and they being publick persons, and officiating in the name of Christ, are much more eyed and observed by all sorts of men than others are; and therefore whatever infamy, and indignity is cast upon them, is much more offensive, hurtful and pernicious, than when the like is cast upon a private person, and that with respect to Jesus Christ, whose *Commissioners and Embassadors they are*, to make peace between him and sinners; and as a *King* will suffer more indignity, by having indignity cast on his Embassadors, than upon thousands of his private subjects, if the like were cast on them; so the great Lord, and *King of Kings* will suffer more by the indignities and reproaches of his *Ministers*, than of others. For as a *King* is immediately (as it were) and more notoriously reproached in the reproaches cast upon his *Embassadors*, because they have the Kings Authority, and do represent their King in their *Embassage*; so is Christ reproached more eminently and notoriously in his *Ministers Reproaches*, because they have his *Authority*, do his work,

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work, and represent him more fully and eminently than any other persons do; so the *Reproaches of the Ministers of Christ*, are far more scandalous, and pernicious unto all sorts of men (as is well known) for their reproaches are of a far more scandalous aspect, to cause their followers to stumble & fall, and to render their Ministers base and contemptible, or altogether useless and unprofitable to the Souls of men; for when they lie under reproach, they are like unfavory salt in the minds and affections of men; and so by reproaches, men do extinguish & put out the lights that Christ hath for his own glory, and the salvation of souls, set up; and so all the indignities that are offered to them, and all the *Reproaches* that are cast on them, are more fully and directly cast on Jesus Christ himself, his people and wayes; yea, the *Reproach* that is cast on one or two of these *Ministers*, is cast on all the *Ministers of Christ*, and their *Ministry*, more than if hundreds of other *Believers* were under the same reproach.

Moreover, the Lord Jesus hath in an especial

especial manner, given a special charge to
 all men, *to honour and esteem his sound and
 faithful Ministers*, more than other men,
 and that for their work and office sake,
 1 *Thes* 5. 12, 13. 1 *Tim*. 5. 17. and as-
 sures all men, who read his Gospel, that all
 the abuses and indignities that are offer-
 ed them by any, are offered to him,
 whose *Officers and Commissioners they are*.
 Yea, the Lord Jesus hath hedged up, and
 secured them by a strict Law, from all re-
 proaches, (so far as a Law can secure
 them) by an *express charge*, that no man
 receive an accusation against any of them
 under two or three *Witnesses*, 1 *Tim*. 5. 19.
 which said Law (were it well observed
 and minded) is sufficient to secure and
 preserve their good names from all Re-
 proaches in their circumspect walking;
 but that *Reproachers* have no respect un-
 to, or regard of Christ his Laws, his ho-
 nour and glory in the world, nor to his
 people, wayes, and ordinances; but their
 own lusts and wills are their laws; and
 reproach they will in spite of him and his
 laws. *But assuredly their sin is exceeding*
 great,

great, and so shall be their punishment, without great and timely repentance and restitution. For the Lord Jesus is so tender of, so concerned with, and in them, and so careful of them, as that he will not endure that any should open their mouths against them, or offer any indignity to them; *not so much as to raise any jealousy or suspicion of them in the minds of others, or entertain any against them in our own hearts; no, not under pain of his hot displeasure.* And therefore as the *Ministers* of Christ should be more careful and watchful, that they sin not, or give any occasion of reproach than others; so, whosoever shall reproach them, they do sin thereby, more than by reproaching others. And although the said *Ministers* are exceeding near and dear to Christ, and very honourable in his account, and would have them to be so in ours; yet, he knows they are not perfect, and without sin, but that they are encompassed about with sins and temptations; yea, they are assaulted with more violent and strong temptations than others are;
 for

for the devil envies and prosecutes them more fiercely than he doth others, that he may render their persons and Ministry contemptible and useles, and that because they are much more prejudicial to his Kingdom of Darknes, in, and by their Office, Ministry, and conversations, than others are ; for they stand more in his way, and detect, and discover his *subtleties and methods* more than other men do.

And therefore the greater their temptations are, and the tryals wherewith the Lord doth exercise them ; the greater tenderness should be shewed them, in case they do at any time stumble and fall: As also for Christ his sake, for his honour, and glory ; and to avoyd scandal to his Gospel, wayes, and people, and for the honour and reputation of their Ministry, *that the Gospel be not hindered.* I speak not this either to excuse or encourage any *Ministers sins*, no ; but to make men cautious how they do speak to them, and carry themselves towards them in case they should be overtaken in a fault, through the strength of temptation, and their own carelesness.

IF

If you do certainly know, or hear them sin, you may undoubtedly (with meekness and humility) reprove them; but you must not at all reproach them, nor blaze abroad to any, their sins, unless in the Lords way, to reclaim them, and bring them to repentance, when your own endeavours and waitings, privately will not do it; or in case they prove incorrigible, and persist in sin. *And undoubtedly, who ever shall speak slightly and villifizingly of them, raise any suspicions of them in the hearts of men; detract from their true worth excellencies, and usefulness in the world, or in the Churches of Christ; and any way, or by any means obstruct, or hinder their usefulness or acceptance amongst men, are guilty of reproaching and defaming them, and of Christ in them.* Wherein, I am afraid, many high professors, yea, and *Ministers* too are notoriously guilty. The Lord give them Repentance.

Thirdly, *Great is their sin and wickedness, who speak evil of, or reproach their near relations; when Children shall re-*
proach

proach their *Parents*, or *Servants* their *Masters*, *Brethren* their *Brethren*; but especially when *Wives* shall speak evil of their *Husbands*, or *Husbands* of their *Wives*; or *Church-members* of their *Pastors*, endeavouring to render them odious and contemptible behind their backs. For as between Husband and Wife, there should be the greatest love and faithfulness, care and diligence to preserve each others reputations, and uphold, and maintain each others interests and concerns in the world; for they to seek and endeavour the ruine of one another, is doubtless a very hainous and crying sin, and such as the light of nature condemns in all men and women. And yet so common and raiging a sin, is this among them, upon any displeasure or offence taken, as is in the world. It is a sad case indeed, that Husbands and Wives should pull out one anothers eyes, and with their Lyon-like teeth, or tongues, back-bite each other, until they have torne out one anothers throat, upon some supposed or real offences given or taken

taken; as if they did delight in each others misery and destruction; yea, and that by such as profess the holy Gospel of Christ. *The thoughts of which fills me full of horror and amazement; what, shall such as ought to be the greatest lovers of one another, yea, honourers of one another, be the great murderers, devourers, and dishonourers of one another? Oh, most horrid, and prodigious wickedness! And yet how common a thing is it, for Wives to go up and down with tales and lying defamations against their Husbands, thrusting swords into their backs, ravishing, defileing, and robbing them of their good names, and making them vile and abominable; making their own jealousies, Suspicions, Lusts, Wills, Fancies, and conceits, the rule and reason of their procedures against them. If Cham, (Noahs Son) was accursed of God, and his Father, for not covering and concealing his Fathers nakedness, when he saw him lye drunk, and uncovered in his Tent, Gen. 9. 21, 22, 25, 26. how much more shall those Wives and Children be accursed, who do make their*

their Husbands and Parents naked, and
 then proclaim their shame, to cause them
 to stink in the nostrils of men, by report-
 ing and affirming that evil of them, which
 they are guiltless of ; or by multiplying
 and augmenting what is true, or by ag-
 gravating and heightning it. *O, how sad*
is it when their love shall be turned into ha-
tred, and their sweetness into wormwood and
gall, against their so near Relations ! O,
how sad is it to see the nearest Friends and
Relations, to become such bitter & hurtful,
such pernicious and wrathful Enemies to one
another ! When such as are intended and
 given of God to be choyce blessings and
 comforts to one another, shall be the
 greatest curses and sorrows to one ano-
 ther. Certainly, the sin of such is ex-
 ceedingly aggravated and heightned ; and
 it will cost them dear one day. For let
 such know, that the great and all-seeing
 God is privy to all their wayes ; and he
 hears and takes notice of all their back-
 biting Reproaches ; and that when they
 are *whispering in the ears of their hearers,*
and muttering out their Reproaches to
them,

them; and he who sees in secret, will reward them, Matth. 6. 4.

It is well known, that *professing Women* do usually make it the matter of their discourse, when they do visit one another, or when they meet together; namely, to back-bite and cast reproach on others: Yea, if they are offended with their own *Husbands*, they shall not escape the rage and venome of their wicked tongues, no more than others; the reason of my saying that this wickedness is commonly practised by women, is (besides what experience shews, as was said) the account the Scriptures gives of them particularly, and by name, in this matter, which certainly is very *observable and significant*, 1 Tim. 3. 11. 1 Tim. 5. 11, 13. Tit. 2. 3. These Scriptures declare plainly, that women are more prone and ready to this evil work, than men are. But now such women as will reproach their own *Husbands*, are monstrous Creatures, and their Company is doubtless to be eschewed and abhorred; for they are such a loathsome generation of Creatures, and

so

so pernicious to man-kind, and to humane society, as that the Scripture calls them Devils, 1 Tim. 3. 11. So the word in Greek is, as I shewed before. Yea, I doubt not, but that persons may keep company, and hold communion with the Devil as safely, as with such a generation of women. I speak not this to cast ~~any~~ reproach on women, nor to condemn all, no, but to convince and humble such as are guilty of this practice; and to hedge up the way of all such who are apt and prone to walk in this accursed path. I know some women, who do hate and greatly abhor this wickedness, and would not practise it for the gaining of the whole world. But to conclude, if it be a great sin for one Neighbour to reproach or speak evil of another, then certainly it is much greater, and much more aggravated, when committed by near Relations against one another.

Fourthly, Their sin is exceeding great, *who defame and reproach the dead*: I say the dead; for they being dead are incapable of defending themselves against their

their Adversaries; or to make any holy improvement of their reproaches : and undoubtedly their *malice, hatred, and envy* is very great against such, as they will not suffer to rest in their graves, but dig up their names, and expose them to scorn, hatred, and contempt ; especially if they are such as they cannot but think and acknowledg were good men ; such as never wronged them, or if they have, yet have given, or offered them all reasonable satisfactions for the wrong ; and are such who were very useful in their lives, and blameless in the general course of their Conversation ; *yea such as did adorn the Gospel of Christ.* Now if the *bloody Papists* are justly condemned for digging up the bones of good men out of their Graves ; and their malice , and superstitious zeal in doing so, be abhorred, and loathed of all good men ; how much more condemnable and abominable are they , whose malice, hatred , and envy prompts, and instigates them *to dig up the good names of good men out of their graves, to make them odious and abominable , to*
 make

make sport with them, as the *Philistins* did with *Sampson*. And although men and women do know that thus to do, is *unnatural and abominable*, and that thereby they do greatly sin and wrong their own Souls ; yet they do and will practice this abomination, and take pleasure in so doing ; I speak what I do know, and testifie what I have seen, and know it to be a common practice.

Now wherein can the malice of men more appear, than in offering such violence and indignity to the dead ; or to the names of good men, when they are at rest in their graves. And doubtless, were not men and women besotted with malice, hatred, and envy, they could never do such wickednesses, nor allow themselves in such barbarous practices. But assuredly God will not wink at it, but thoroughly plead their cause, and render recompences to their **Enemies**, according to their ways. For it is horrid injustice, and inhumane cruelty which shall not escape unpunished ; but first or last, God will without fail, recompence their way
upon

upon their own heads, and reward them according to the fruit of their doings.

Object. *If it be Objected, but we speak nothing of them, but what we know, and can justify.*

I Answer. It may be so, but what then? will that excuse you before God or men? no, in no wise, for *thou art forbidden to speak evil of any man*, Tit. 3. 2. Jam. 4. 11. 1 Pet. 2. 1. and that while living; much less when dead. But *First*, If you knew him to sin when alive, why had you not then endeavoured by reproofs, and instructions to have convinced and brought him to repentance, as you were commanded, *Levit. 19. 17, Gal. 6. 1.* *Secondly*, How do you know but that he repented of his sins before he dyed, and gave satisfaction to such as he had wronged; and if so, then great is your sin, to reproach him now he is dead, with the sins he repented of while alive. *Thirdly*, What call have you to speak of his sins now he is dead? what warrant have you to do so? yea, are you not forbidden it, as was shewed before. *Fourthly.*

ly, What are your ends in speaking evil of him now? are they not to reproach him, and make him odious and hateful? Is it not to ease your malicious minds, and to disgorge your suffocated stomachs, that are full of Pride, Envy, and boyling wrath and choler, at his good name? Surely you cannot indeed have any holy, righteous and charitable ends; neither to do him, or any other man any good; neither to profit his Relations, that are alive or dead; nor yet to profit your own souls, or glorify God. Wherefore (to be short) whoever you are, who shall practise this wickedness on the good names of the dead, though they are dead to the world, yet they are alive to you; and their reproached names will rise up in judgment, and witness against you one day, to your everlasting reproach and damnation, except you repent and make restitution to their good names, whom you have so foully abused.

Thirdly, *This sin is aggravated and greatly heightned, when men Reproach others behind their backs, and will not be*

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known

known to be the Authors or Spreaders of it. For as this sin is made more exceeding sinful, *Rom. 7* by being committed by, and on the afore said persons; so it is also by the manner and the ends of their practice of it. Now, as was said before, this sin of slandering and reproaching of others, is such an odious, hateful, devillish, and self-condemning a sin, as that the *Actors* of it are ashamed to be known, and therefore they do it in corners, and greatly desire privacy. They will stab and murder a good man, but they will not by any means have it discovered; but charge their hearers to be as private as possible; and if ever it come to the ears of the reproached, that they are defamed, they must be sure to conceal their names. But this unmanly, and inhumane behaviour of theirs, doth greatly aggravate their wickedness. For, they do by their privacy, hinder him of the best advantage and opportunity for his own defence, and clearing himself; for the reproach spreads abroad far and near, to his exceeding great detriment, and finds acceptance amongst men; but the

the *Authors* are hid and cannot be found, though they are still practising their works of darkness against him. So that these Reproachers deal by him, as the *Murderers in Ireland dealt with the English Protestants there*, they first tyed their arms behind them, put out their eyes, and then Murdered them : Just so do they deal with such as they do reproach ; they will first put out, or blind their eyes with fair, sweet, and deceiving words and carriages, that they may not suspect them to have any evil design against them ; and then go into Corners, and murder them with their venomous tongues, and as it were tye their hands behind them, by their lying hid in Corners, and utterly disenable them from helping themselves against them : for, as *Adders*, when they have secretly bitten a man, will presently retreat to their holes in the Rock, where they lye, and there secure themselves from men ; so, these back-biting Reproachers do : And therefore of all other Reproachers they are the worst, most dangerous and pernicious to men, and their

sin is greater, as they will one day know.

Secondly, Their sin is aggravated and greatly heightned, when they do design and intend to hurt with their Reproaches such as they do reproach; when they do design to detract from them, and to make them vile and contemptible, that they may be slighted and disdained, that they may not be loved, honoured, and respected, but hated and abhorred, deserted and rejected of their friends, and acquaintants, yea of all men. This was *Sauls* design when he reproached *David*, 1 Sam. 19. and 23 Chapters. And this was the design of the *false Teachers* against *Paul*, Phil. 1. 16. and also of the *false Prophets* against *Jeremy*. 'Tis true, that I cannot discern any better ends, any Reproachers can have in their reproaching at any time, when they do reproach and back-bite their Friends and Neighbours than these; but of this however we may be sure, that whenever they do reproach them, it cannot be designed to a good end; and whenever they do design and intend these,
or

or such like ends, they do most certainly heighten and aggravate their sin. But this will be easily granted of all men; and therefore I do beseech every one to prove his own work, Gal. 6. and to examine his own heart, and ask, if when at any time you have reproached and defamed others, you have not had in your hearts, and carryed on such *mischievous designs* against the objects of your reproach, and that when you knew it would hurt them.

Thirdly, *Their sin is aggravated, and greatly heightened, when they do raise or report the real evils and miscarriages of men, especially of good men, with undue aggravating circumstances, and additions; making the faults of men, greater, and more than indeed they are; that so they may fasten the greater reproach upon them, and gain a reception of them in the hearts of their hearers, without which (it may be) they would not be minded or regarded, but slighted and rejected.* This is the usual way of Reproachers, who have large Consciences, and long Tongues, they will make Mole-hills as big as Mountains,

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tains, and make all the failings of the reproached, look with a gasty and formidable countenance. They make their matters good, with wilful lying, and charging them with a great deal more guilt than, indeed and in truth, they can justly charge upon them ; that so they may blast them, and make their names to stink, which makes their sin so much the more sinful. For their sin is doubled and trebled : *for they greatly sin in speaking, or reporting abroad what is really true of them :* and then they do aggravate and greaten it, and that with a purpose to make it stick, and abide on the hearts of their Auditors, and to make them vile and hateful to men. Oh, most horrid Villany ! Oh, most prodigious wickedness !

Fourthly, Their sin is aggravated, *When they do assert and confidently affirm, What they do reproach men withal, is true ; and that as to the matter, manner, ends, and circumstances of it, as they have reported and related it, when indeed it is not so ; or, in case it be so, yet they know it not so to be, but upon vulgar reports, or* of

of those who hate them, and are their *real and apparent Enemies*, which indeed ought not to be believed nor received; much less should they be given in as testimonies against them. Yea, it is directly against the laws and rules of *Justice and Charity*, which all men are bound to shew forth and practise to one another; to take up, entertain, and spread abroad; to censure, judge, and condemn men upon vulgar reports, or upon the testimony of their *Enemies*, and such as do hate them; and therefore, doubtless, their iniquity is exceeding great, who do in their words and practices take up, and spread abroad evil reports, to the reproach and infamy of men, especially if they are good men, upon such weak grounds, and uncertain evidences as these are. And yet there is nothing more common than for men, either from their uncharitable *jealousies and surmises*, their fancies and conceits, the uncertain sound of vulgar reports, and the unjust testimonies and accusations of their bitter and notorious *Enemies*, to receive and divulge reproaches of good men;

and such men and women do evidently declare thereby, that they do hate and abhor such persons as they do cast Reproaches on; and also that they are their bitter Enemies; yea, that they do neither fear God, nor reverence men; and that they are persons of the same spirit, with those mentioned and described, *Rom. i. 29. 30. 31.*

Fifthly, Their sin is aggravated, *When they do speak evil of such persons as they do verily think, and are perswaded, are gracious, holy, and righteous men*: yea, let them ask their Consciences at any time, and they will tell them that such as they do reproach, are holy and righteous men; that they are beloved of God, and real lovers of God; and that they would not sin, or knowingly commit such sins as they do accuse them of, and reproach them for; not for the gaining of a world, no, nor to save their lives from any violent death. And yet it is well known, and too too often experienced, that *Reproachers* and *Defamers* will not spare such men any more than others: yea, though

though they do know that they do wickedly therein, and are convinced in their Consciences that they are serious and holy men, yet they will reproach them in spite of God and their Consciences; like *Saul* and *Pilate*, who, though they knew, and were convinced that *David* and *Jesus Christ* were just, holy, and innocent men, yet they would persecute, give judgment upon, reproach, and condemn them. Therefore their sin must needs be exceeding great and hainous. It is true, that Reproachers have an art to reprobate the Objects of their hatred and envy, such as they have marked out for Reproach, and chosen to carry, or wear their *black badg and livery*, before they brand them, or when they are about the work; but yet then their Consciences speak contrary language of them; and at other times, when they are asked, they will confess that they do verily think, they are good men and women which they do reproach and cast dirt upon with their back-biting tongues. And thus having given you a brief account of some of the aggravations

of the sin I am speaking of, I shall endeavour to answer some Questions, and remove some Objections out of the way, and then draw to a close of all.

CHAP. VI.

Objections and Questions answered.

Obj. **I**T may be objected by some; Surely this cannot be so great a sin as you say it is; for, if it were so indeed, doubtless the Ministers of the Gospel would preach and write more against it than they do, to convince men of the great evil and danger of it, and dissuade men from it.

Answ.

Ans. Although this Objection may seem to have weight in it, yet indeed and in truth it hath none at all, to weaken or invalidate what I have before asserted and confirmed by many Scripture-testimonies. For what though *Ministers* do neglect to detect and reprove many sins? Are they not sins notwithstanding, if the word of God declare them to be so, as it hath abundantly declared this to be, as hath been manifested? Shall any man once imagine that this is good *Logick*, or *sound Divinity*; that, because *Ministers* do not discharge their duty according to their commission and trust, as commanded, that therefore what they did neglect to observe and do, was not their duty, and that which they should have observed and done in obedience to their Lord and King? Good *Ely* ought to have rebuked and restrained his Sons from committing such abominations against the Lord as they did, though he did it not, *1 Sam. 3. 13.* *David* should have put his Son *Absolom* to death for Murdering his Brother, according to that Law in *Gen. 9. 6.* but he did

did it not. The *Ministers* of Christ are charged to cry aloud and spare not, to lift up their voice like a Trumpet, and (saith God) shew my people their transgressions, and the house of Jacob their sins. In this and other Texts of Scripture, we may see what is their duty, and what they ought to do, namely, to discover and make known unto men their sins. Which I hope all good men do in some measure; and that they do sometimes discover to their *Auditors* the evil and danger of the sin of reproaching in particular: but whatever they do, or leave undone in this matter, it is most certain, that to back-bite defame, or to speak evil of another, as hath been shewed and proved, is a very great and a Soul-damning sin. But I hasten.

Object. It is again objected, but whatever you say to the contrary, we may speak of, and declare the real sins of any men to others, whether they are good or bad; provided we do know, or believe them to be guilty of them, either upon our own personal knowledg of them, or upon such reports as we hear: for, *Paul* spake

spake of, and declared the sins of the *Corinthians*, and *Galathians*, and the Scriptures declare the sins of *David*, *Solomon*, and others, who were good men, as well as the sins of *Ahab*, *Manasseh*, and other bad men; therefore without all doubt, we may do so too.

Ans. I answer, first, The instances you have given in the Objection, will not at all help you, nor acquit you of being guilty of sinning and transgressing the Law of God; if you shall speak of men, especially of good men, or declare their real sins, and known miscarriages: unless you do it in Christs way, according to his rule and appointment, and that for his glory and their good, who have sinned. For the word of God is express in the case, charging and enjoining men *to speak evil of no man*, Tit. 3. 2. And *speak not evil one of, or against, another*, Jam. 4. 11. And, *Thou shalt not go up and down as a Tale-bearer*, Levit. 19. 16. And I have before (I doubt not) sufficiently proved that it is a most horrid and abominable sin, by the Authority of the word

word of God. And the Scripture doth not really contradict its self, nor countenance that in one place, that it condemns in another: no, the Scripture contains the revealed will of God, shewing men what God is, so far as it is needful for them; and what he hath and will do for men; what they should believe, observe, and do, in order to their eternal happiness, and for their pleasing and honouring of God here. Now then, as the great and holy God, who is the only and sole *Author* of the Scripture, is not, cannot be contrary to himself; so neither can his word in the true sense and meaning of it, be contrary to its self; and therefore whatever the word of God forbids any where, or declares to be a sin, that is a real sin; although all the good men in the world be found in the practice of it. And whoever shall produce or make use of any Scripture-instances, or practices of the best of men, to excuse or acquit them, or any way to countenance them in the breach of *positive or moral precepts*; they will assuredly find in the end, that they
are

are transgressors of the Laws, by which they ought to walk ; that they have laboured in the fire, *and kickt against the pricks.* And although they may hide and shelter themselves for a time, under the shadow and covert of such instances ; yet at last their sin will find them out, their Consciences will plead guilty , and they shall not go unpunished ; all which I could largely prove, were it necessary.

But Secondly, I answer what *Paul* did in those instances, he did by divine appointment, by the direction and command of the Holy Ghost. God call'd him to do it, and therefore it was his duty ; for, saith he, *1 Cor. 11. 23. I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you ; and all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, 2 Tim. 3. 16.* and *Peter* tells us, *that holy men spake as they were moved, or carried by the Holy Ghost.* Now when any men can shew the same Authority upon the same, or the like occasions, to do or speak what they are supposed to have done or spoken, for the justifying of their practice ; they shall not meet with any
con-

contradiction from me. I hope the Sovereign Lord of his Creatures may do, and command his Creatures to speak and do what he pleases, without giving them any account of his matters, or reasons of his proceedings. His Sovereign Will is the rule and reason of what he doth, and of all the injunctions he laies on his Creatures, to go, speak, or do. But God hath given men Laws and Rules to walk by; by, and according to which, they are bound, *Isa. 8. 20. Gal. 6. 16.* but so is not God himself. *'Tis true, He hath bound himself to his Creatures, I mean to Believers, by his promises;* but God is not under any restraint, as to his Commanding, or prohibiting of men, as to what they shall, or shall not do or speak : Therefore unless you can prove that you may, as well as God himself, do to, or speak of men so or so; or that because God hath done so, therefore you may do the same without any further warrant; or, because some good men have by his authority and appointment, declared, and published the sins and miscarriages of others; there-
fore

fore you may do so too; though God hath expressly forbidden you once and again so to do ; you may do well to consider your waies, relinquish your conclusions drawn from these instances, and beware in season how you make God a patron of your wickedness. And know, that words and deeds shall at the last day be judged whether they are good, or bad, *by the written Law and Gospel of God*; and therefore they must now be made the only Standard and Rule of all our wayes, words, and deeds, both towards God and men. For assuredly such a plea as this, will be of no force before the Judgment seat; namely, that because God did do so, or commanded his *Prophets and Apostles* to do or speak so; therefore you took the boldness to do so likewise: Except you can shew the same warrant for your practice, as they can, or could do; but that I am sure you cannot; and therefore this plea will not be valid, nor of any force.

Thirdly, You have heard it proved before, that you may not take up reports,
nor

nor speak evil of any good man, upon vulgar reports. For I have shewed that it is against all *rules of Justice and Charity*, to accuse and condemn a man of any crime upon common reports; for so the best and most innocent men in the world may be always accused, judged, and condemned of hainous Crimes which they are clear of: yea, no man, no not a *Moses*, or a *Paul*, can, or will be safe in his, or their good names, or have their Credit and Reputations secured to them, one day, but they may be slandered and reproached continually without remedy; especially considering how exceeding apt and prone men are to reproach and slander all such as are the objects of their wrath and indignation; and considering how rife and rampant a sin this is in the world, and how little Conscience there is left in men. *For it is evident that men do generally take the liberty to speak and report of one another what they please*; and so they will still do, let men do all they can to prevent them, until the Lord shall awaken and sanctifie their Consciences. And therefore if you
do

do believe and credit such reports as tend to the reproach of good men, and take liberty to report or declare what is so brought to you, unto others; and thereby cast reproach upon them, by spreading and divulging the reproach that is already raised by others: you do sin greatly, and transgress the holy Law of God; and that will be no excuse at all to say, You do believe what is reported to be true; for you ought not to believe it upon such grounds, and if you do believe, and take it up upon such grounds, you do err in so doing; for you ought not to believe, or receive any evil report against others, especially if they are good men, but upon the *testimony of two or three Credible Witnesses, testifying positively upon their own knowledge, the fact he is accused of*; and not then, until you have heard him make his own defence, or to speak for himself. For so hath God ordained as you may see in *Deut. 17. 6. Deut. 19. 15. Math. 18. 16.* Now, whosoever he be that believes, receives, and spreads an evil report of a man, which will lay him under

under reproach, blast his reputation, and deprive him of his good name; that person doth thereby make himself an *Accuser, Judg, Witness, and Executioner of him whom he reproaches*; and it is as lawful for a man, when he pleases, to accuse judg, condemn, and take away a mans Life by himself, without any more ado, or further process, as in such a way, to take away a mans good name. For if it be lawful for me to rob a man of *twelve pence*, when and how I please, by the same rule it is lawful for me to rob him of all that he hath. But without all Controversie they are all abominable and Soul-damning sins.

Fourthly, The Apostle and others, who declared the Saints sins, by the command of God, did not go and tell others of them, but declared their own sins unto themselves; I say to the persons offending, in order to their Conviction and Repentance, and not to others, to lay them under infamy and reproach. *Nathan* comes to *David*, and tells him of his sin, and labours to convince and humble him
with

with the words of God, 2 Sam. 12. Paul sends an *Epistle* to the sinning *Corinthians*, to shew them their sins, and so call them to Repentance, by the direction of the Holy Ghost; and the like he did to other Churches. They did not defame them, and divulge their sins to others behind their backs, and endeavour to make them odious as the Reproachers do; no, but they went in Gods way, and dealt with them so, as to do them good. They told them of their *real miscarriages to their faces*, that they might thereby recover them out of the snare of the Devil, 2 Tim. 2. ult. and to hinder them in sinning, that they might bear and fear, and do no more so wickedly, as they had done; and not to provoke them to sin, as I have shewed *Defamers and Backbiters* do.

Fifthly, What ever sins they were guilty of, whom they did reprove and endeavour to convince, in order to the bettering of them, they had certain and infallible knowledg and assurance of; that whatever they heard of their miscarriages, was really true; for God himself revealed

vealed it to them, and was their *Witness*. God knew what sins they were guilty of, and told his *Messengers* of them; and accordingly they informed and reproved the sinners themselves, and said no more than they certainly knew to be true; for God himself had detected and accused them, and he did effectually prove the charge against them, so as that the persons themselves could not deny it, but owned and acknowledged their Crimes, *2 Sam. 12. 2 Cor. 7.* And what they did, therein they did not of, or from themselves, *but as the Lords Servants and Ministers.* But so do not the Back-biting Defamers that I am detecting of. Besides, *Paul*, had sufficient testimonies from men of the sins of the Churches he reproveth, as in *1 Cor. 1. 11.* and in many other places; so that these objected Instances will not at all relieve or excuse *Defamers*.

Sixthly, God was pleased to reveal and make known the sins of some of his people, *for many high and weighty reasons*, such as the Creature cannot pretend to have in divulging the sins of men.

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As First, To vindicate and declare the justice and equity of his proceedings with them, in afflicting of them for their sins: When a Court of Justice punisheth an Offender for any hainous Crime, they may righteously declare the reason of their righteous and legal proceedings; and how much more may God himself do so? *David* sinned, and God punished him, and he told men why he did so, by shewing what *David* had done to provoke him to wrath.

2. God discovers the sins of his people unto men, to declare how great and unchangable his love and grace to them is, in pardoning, healing, and restoring them, with a notwithstanding all their transgressions.

3. God discovers some of his peoples sins sometimes, to manifest his hatred and detestation of them, who hates their sins, although he loves their persons; and this he would have men to know.

4. To make others fear, and tremble at the presence of sin, and to beware of it, and avoyd the occasions and appearance of evil.

5. To

5. To shew men that the best and dearest of his people, *are not perfect in this life*, but that they have the indwelling of sin in their hearts.

6. To provoke and quicken men to *Watch and Pray*, that they enter not into temptation, and to mortifie the flesh with the affections and lusts, and with spiritual weapons to fight against their sins and temptations: These and such like ends hath God in declaring his peoples sins; not to reproach, defame, and vilifie them; not to make them hateful and odious to men, as *Backbiting Reproachers* do.

Object. But if it were so great a sin as you say it is, then surely Professors of the Gospel would not practise it as they do; we find them notoriously guilty of it, which they would not be, were it indeed such a foul and God-provoking sin; such a hainous and abominable sin, as you say it is.

Ans. I grant, that Professors of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, are very guilty of this sin, which should be matter of Lamentation and Grief of heart to us; for they do dishonour God and good men by their

their so doing ; and therefore, as *Rivers of water did run down David's eyes, because men did not keep Gods Laws*, so should we, who profess to know and love God, pour out tears abundantly for the riseness of this Iniquity.

Secondly, That is no argument at all to prove, that this is not a great sin ; namely, because Professors of the Gospel are found in the practice of it.

For 1st. There are many Professors of the Gospel, who are false to their profession, *who have a form of Godliness, but deny the power of it in their practice*, 2 Tim. 3. 5. *Who profess to know God, but in works do deny him*, Tit. 1. ult. All men know, that this is no news.

2. We know also that many good men have been found in gross miscarriages, as *Joseph swearing twice together by the life of Pharoah*, Gen. 42. *David tells several lies in two Chapters of the first of Samuel*: and he with many other of the eminent Servants of God, lived in the constant practice of *Polygamy*: Were they not great sins, notwithstanding they lived

in the practice of them; (though I doubt not but they were in a measure ignorant in those days, of the sinfulness of those sins)? Certainly they were; and so is this sin of robbing others of their good names, though all the men in the world, good as well as bad men, lived in the practice of it. *A sin is never the less sinful because practised by good men,* or such as profess to be so; or because it is commonly practised by men professing Godliness.

3. *Professors of Godliness* have many Lusts in their hearts, and many temptations to quicken and draw forth their Lusts. They have the Lusts of *Pride, Envy, Malice, Hatred, Wrath, Anger, Jealousie, Covetousness,* and many other such roots of bitterness in them; and they have multitudes of temptations to quicken and draw them forth into acts; and therefore no wonder if they be sometimes found guilty of this wickedness.

Yet 4thly, I hope, yea, and do believe, that very few, if any, truly gracious men, or women, *are ever found in the practice*

practice of this foul abomination, as others are. For the practice of this sin must ordinarily be with deliberation, and premeditation, and is attended with many *curfed ends and designs*, as hath been shewed. I do not say that gracious and holy men may not be guilty of it: no, for there is not a good man upon earth secured by any promise of God from falling once or twice into any sin whatsoever; (the unpardonable Sin only excepted) and if so, then it is possible for them to fall into this sin: But, I say *they do not live in the practice of it*, as other men do, because the light, love, and fear of God is in their hearts; and this is a *Moral* sin, against natural Conscience, as well as against their spiritual light and consciences, and we seldome find any of the Saints, or peculiar people of God in Scripture, guilty of this sin, as they were of other sins; and doubtless if they had, we should have hear'd on't, as well as of their other sins. Indeed rotten-hearted, and hypocritical Professors of Godliness, may be, and are undoubtedly found in the practice of this

fin, but not real - hearted Saints ; and therefore this objection hath no weight in it ; for the practitioners of this abomination, are usually set among the vilest of men, in the word of God, and are accounted as the worst of men ; *Rom. 1. 29, 30. 1 Cor. 6. 9, 10.* I confess that Saints while they are very ignorant, or under great temptations, may fall into it, and be guilty of it ; but then, they do quickly, upon their receiving of light to convince them of the evil of it, repent, and amend, and endeavour to give satisfaction to such as they have defamed. But I dare not think that the peculiar, and choyse people of Christ, can live in the practice of this sin, of murdering the good names of men, especially of good men, *1 Joh. 2. 15.*

Object. But we do not report, or divulge the evils of others, upon vulgar reports, for we abhor to do so ; but we do certainly know, that they are guilty of all that we say or report of them ; all which we can prove and make good.

Ans. It may be so : but yet that will not excuse you, nor acquit you of the horri-

horrible sin of reproaching and defaming. For God chargeth you *not to speak evil one of another*, Jam. 4. 11. Tit. 3. 2. although you do certainly know them to be guilty of sin.

Secondly, If you do certainly know them guilty as you say, Why do you not deal with them according to the rules of Jesus Christ, *Math. 18. 15, 16. Gal. 6. 1.* in order to their healing and reformation, as you are commanded to do? that so you may please God, and profit their Souls, get, and keep the peace of God in your own Consciences? Why must you spread it abroad, and render them odious to others, and suffer them to continue under sin, when it is in the power of your hand to help them out, and your duty so to do? *Levit. 19. 17.*

Thirdly, What ends can you have in your eye, in divulging their real sins? but to disgorge your malice, hatred, envy, or wrath on their good names, and to render them odious and contemptible in the eyes of men. For it is certain you cannot think, nor believe that you shall please

and honour God, or any way profit such as have sinned, by reporting and divulging their sins behind their backs; for your Consciences will condemn you (if you will hearken to them) as evil-doers, in such unwarrantable and unrighteous proceedings against your Brethren, or acquaintance; and they will tell you, that you are dishonouring of God and men, and walking in an unholy, and an unrighteous way, which you will never be able to justify.

Fourthly, I believe it will be easily demonstrated upon a little search, that you, and such as you are, do not, indeed, but only in pretence, abhor to divulge the real, or supposed sins of others, upon *vulgar Reports*; for you whose Consciences are so large, as to spread abroad the known miscarriages of others, especially of reputed good men, irregularly, and unduly, contrary to the express will of God; will not at all stick to do so, upon *vulgar Reports*. For he that doth sincerely endeavour to observe and keep any one Command of God, will also from
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the same principle, and by the same reason, endeavour to keep all the Commands of God; and he who can knowingly admit, dispence with, and commit any one sin; will by the same reason admit, dispence with, and commit all other sins, if he hath opportunity, and temptation so to do.

Fifthly, *We are charged and required to do to others, as we would have others do to us, Math. 7.* Now would you be so dealt withal by them? if not, why do you deal so with them? Ask your Consciences, Would we have others divulge and spread abroad all the miscarriages they see and know us guilty of? Should we not account it a grievous affliction if they should do so? *Should we not account it horrid injustice, and inhumane cruelty in them, and look upon them as our great Enemies?* surely we should. Well then, is it so hainous an evil in them, & is it not the same in us? Are not we and they bound to walk towards one another by the same Rules? Are we not all under the same Law, and *in subjection to the same*

Law-giver ? And are we not strictly commanded to do to others as we would have them do to us ? and if so, then we may not, we must not by any means (but in the way of Christ) divulge the known miscarriages of others.

Object. It is again objected; If to speak evil of others behind their back, be a sin, yet not so great a sin, as you would persuade men it is; for it is a sin (if a sin) onely against sinful men; and what are they ?

Ans. I have abundantly proved, that it is not only a sin, but also that it is a very great, abominable, and pernicious sin: which prooffs I doubt not, but will abide the tryal, and stand firm against all the Lusts of men, and Objections of the Devil; Entreating all that shall read these lines, to read them seriously, and with a single eye; weigh, and ponder them impartially, yield up their Judgments and Consciences to the light and authority of truth declared and demonstrated in them; and keep your selves in an even ballance; and I doubt not, but through the help of the Spirit, they will captivate and lead you to right

right apprehensions of this sin, and cause you to believe that it is far more sinful than I have, or am able to declare it to be.

Secondly, Whereas you say it cannot be so great a sin, because it is a sin only against men, yea sinful men.

I answer, 1st. It is not only a sin against sinful men, but also against such as God calls and accounts holy and righteous men; for usually *defaming back biters* do single out the holiest for their reproach; and then they do reproach holy men, as well as sinful men, when they do speak evil of them; for although good men are sinful men, yet these sinful men, are also Godly men: and when men do speak evil of them, they do reproach them as good men, or the good that is in them.

2. Such as speak evil of others, especially of good men, do sin against God, as well as against men; yea, they sin more against God, than against men; for they do break his Laws, rebel against his *Authority*, and cast his fear behind their

backs : they refuse obedience to him, and set up their Lusts in opposition to their God ; yea, they obey their Lusts, and reject the Government of God, by their so doing ; for God hath strictly forbidden them to speak evil one of another, and yet they will do it ; and how then, can they say they sin only against sinful men ? when they do so apparently transgress the holy Laws of God ? *David* was of another mind, when he had robbed *Uriah* of his Wife, and Life, wherein he wronged them greatly, in causing the one to sin, and the other to dye, *1 Sam. 11. Psal. 51.* yet he tells God, that against him, he had only sinned ; and why so ! but because he had broken and transgressed the Law of God, slighted or despised his Authority, *2 Sam. 12.* So when you defame others, you do sin against God, by transgressing his Laws, and despising his Authority, as much, or as really as *David* did ; although you commit not the same sins. Besides, when ever you raise or foment evil reports of holy and good men, you thereby defile and blemish God himself (as

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was shewed before.) For they have the name and glorious Image of the blessed God stamped on them, *2 Pet. 1. 4. Col. 3. Eph. 4.* And therefore they are called, or named, *Godly and holy men* in Scripture : and hence it is (as for other reasons) that he is so tender and chary of them, as to assure us, *that he that toucheth them, toucheth the apple of his eye, Zach. 2. 8. and whatever good or evil is done to them, is likewise done to himself, Math. 25. Acts 9.*

Thirdly, Though you sin against men directly, yet not only, or chiefly, as you have heard : So know, that God will not have his reasonable Creatures wronged or abused by their fellow-Creatures; and therefore God hath hedged up their way by many Laws. For when the only wise, and gracious God gave men Laws to walk by, he did not only provide for the securing of his own holy name, His honour and glory from the *Reproaches* of men, but also for the security of the good names of good men; and therefore he made and gave them two Tables of holy and righteous

ious Laws, the *first* for himself, and the *second* for men; especially the *third Command* of the first Table, and the *ninth Command* of the second. And God hath charged men upon pain of death, to observe and keep them all, the one as well as the other; and the Authority of God is as much to be obeyed in the one, as in the other; and his *Authority* is as much despised in breaking the one, as the other. And as God will not hold him *guiltless* who dishonours His holy name, so he will not hold him guiltless, who dishonours the good names of Men. And to speak with reverence, God is in some sense as tender of the good names of his people, as of his own; for, when they are dishonoured, he is dishonoured; and he tells us, *Math. 25. In as much as ye have done so, to these my Brethren, ye have done it unto me.*

Fourthly, Pray ask your *Consciences*, and suffer them to speak out without snubbing them; and observe well, if they do not speak for God, and the good names of men, and tell you plainly that you have greatly and most egregiously
sinned.

sinned against God, and your Brethren, Friends, and Acquaintance, in speaking evil of them, and endeavouring to expose them to *scorn and ignominy*. Your Consciences will accuse and condemn you of *horrid Villany*, of notorious wickedness against God and them. They will tell you, that you are *guilty of Murder, Uncleaness, and of Robbing them of their pretious Jewels* whom you have defamed. They will tell you that your *Pride, Envy, Hatred, Malice, Wrath, and Jealousie*; that your *Covetousness and the Devil*, put you upon that work. They will tell you, that you did *design and carry on, cursed ends*, in what you have spoken of, or against them: and then you will see, that it is not so small a sin as you would have it to be. And then it will wound you to the heart, to think what hurt and mischief you have done, in robbing men of their good names. You will say no more, *It is a little one, and your Souls shall live*; no, but you will say, *It was a great one, and your Souls shall rue for it in Hell-fire to all Eternity, without Repentance*

For

For you will then find, that, That is no small sin in Gods account, which shuts men out of his Kingdom, as this doth, 1 Cor. 6. Rom. 1. So in *Jude*, and 1 Cor. 5. And God ranks this among the worst of sins: And there are many other sins against men, expressed and implied in the second Table of the Law, which surely you will not say are little sins, because they do directly and immediately respect men. What say you to *Murder*, *Adultery*, and *Stealing*, are they not very great sins, and yet they are directly committed against men?

Object. But we hope we do not speak evil of such men as we know or think to be Godly men, but only of such as pretend to be so, but indeed are not.

Ans. But you are forbidden, as you have heard, to speak evil of any man in such a way as you usually do; unless they are such as are open and notorious sinners, and proclaim their own shame and wickedness to all that shall behold them; and of such men I am not speaking; and therefore, if they are not generally known to be

be such as practise Drunkenness, Adultery, Cheating, Defaming, Stealing, Swearing, Cursing, Lying, false Doctrine, Idolatry, Superstition, Persecution, Oppression, apparent and visible Hypocrisie, or the like; or live in the open and frequent neglect of the most substantial duties and parts of Morality and Religion; you ought not to speak evil of them. But if you know them live in the practice of the duties of Morality and Religion, and cannot justly charge them with the foresaid abominations, or others like them, in the general course of their lives; and that they are persons who live in peace with all men, and not in *Pride, Wrath, and Contention*, nor in such like sins: Certainly you ought not to speak evil of them.

Secondly, It is the usual way of men, who are prone to the practice of this sin, to *Reprobate* such as they will reproach, that so they may not be charged with reproaching of good men: For in so doing they know they may reproach themselves; and therefore with the help of the Devil, they will first set the mark of an Hypocrite upon

upon them. They do herein, as the *Persecutors* were said to do in the *Primitive times*, they would cause some to be deflowred, and then punished as fornicators; and others to be wrapt up in *Bear-skins*, and thrown to the doggs, that the doggs might worry them like *Bears*. Now as the *Heathens* of old dealt with the *Christians* in those daies, so do many *Defaming Back-biters* deal with good men now: Such as they have a mind to set the *black mark* of *Reproach* on, they will first set the *black mark* of a *Hypocrite* or *Reprobate* upon. And it is a very easie matter for men to cast a *Fools Coat* on a man, and then proclaim him to be a *Fool*. But I would seriously advise all such men and women to consider their ways, and who it is that perswades them to think that such men as they reproach, are *Hypocrites*; and be sure you have sufficient evidence, light, and unbiased judgments, to judge truly and rightly of them; for else you may call evil, good; and good, evil; and condemn the *Righteous*, and such as God hath justified; and that will be biteernes

in the end. Ask your hearts, if your Pride, Malice, Envy, Hatred, Jealousie, Prejudice, Wrath, or Anger, your self-interest, or design you have against them, have not put you upon your judging them to be but pretenders of Godliness; and if these Lusts and Ends have not blinded your judgments against them, so that you cannot, or will not, see the Grace of God in them, nor judg them to be good men.

Object. But we hope, we have not spoken evil of others from Pride, Malice, Envy, Wrath, Hatred, Jealousie, or such like roots and causes, nor designed, or intended them any hurt or mischief, as you say Defamers do.

Ans. Know that the heart is deceitful and desperately wicked; Who can know it? Jer. 17. and therefore you may easily be deceived in the causes and ends of your defaming. The eyes of men are exceeding loath to see in a glass the ugly botches and deformities of the face wherein they are; so are defamers loath to see the ugly causes and ends of their wicked works; yea doubtless they will not know them, that

that so they may go on in their ways the more quietly.

Secondly, But though you hope, you are not acted by those Lusts ; and design, and intend no such ends in defaming; yet I am satisfied that you are *guilty*. For what should move you to act such wickedness ? what should move you to ruine, or to speak that which may ruine the good names of men, but your Lusts, together with the help of the Devil ? Surely you will not say that the Spirit of God, the Grace of God, or good Angels, will put you upon sin, and breaking the holy Laws of God, or stir you up to wrong your Neighbours. You dare not say, it was your love to them, or care of their souls or bodies, that put you upon *trading or defaming* of them ; if not, then of necessity you must own that you were acted and moved by your Lusts and the Devil. And surely, your ends cannot be good, when the causes are so bad : for *an evil Tree cannot bring forth good Fruit* : What are your ends then ? are they to better them, to convince them of their
sins,

sins, and bring them to *Repentance*, as they ought to be? that cannot be, because they neither hear, nor know what you say of them; for you lay open their sins to others, not to themselves, and how then can you convince them; which if you did intend, you would tell them of their sins to their faces, and labour with them to convince them. But seeing you hide their sins from them, and reveal them to others behind their backs; it is certain, that you design and intend to rob and spoyl them of their good names, and to satisfy your Lusts upon them. All which you will find true one day.

Thirdly, I have abundantly proved, that *Defamers* are acted by such Lusts, intend and carry on such cursed ends, as have been once and again mentioned, and therefore, until the contrary be proved, I shall conclude that you are acted by those Lusts; intend and carry on such ends, and designs against the good names of men. But whether you have, or have not, if you have *defamed good men, or meer civil and moral men*, as you grant you have; you

you are guilty of a very great sin ; and therefore I do advise you to repent speedily, and seek for pardon in the blood of Christ.

Object. But, for ought we know, they may be guilty of more and greater sins than we do report them to be guilty of; and therefore we may report of them as they are known to be, seeing they may be much worser.

Answ. If I had not heard *this Foolish Objection* made, I should not have mentioned it; for surely it is a very foolish and childish objection. For, First you may not divulge the known sins of men, but in the way of Jesus Christ, according to his direction and appointment, and that when you are called so to do, as hath been proved and demonstrated before.

Secondly, You sin greatly upon a twofold account. First, in *surmising and suspecting men, especially good men*, to be worser than you know them to be, or to be guilty of committing greater sins than you do know them to be guilty of. For *secret things belong to God to judge*, and not to you : and God expressly condemns such

such *surmisings* or *suspensions* of men;
1 Tim. 6. 4 *2 Cor. 12. 20.* For, if they
 are good men, you ought to think them
 better than sometimes they seem to be.
 Secondly, You sin in making your evil
surmisings an argument of your speaking e-
 vil of, or reproching them; for it is con-
 trary to *Justice* and *Charity*; for the
 Scripture tells us that *love thinketh no evil*,
1 Cor. 13. and it is against *Justice* to take
 encouragement from uncertainties, to
 wrong or abuse another, or to lay any
 punishment on him.

Object. But you know it is commonly
 said, that where there is *smoak*, there is
 fire too; if we hear it reported, that such,
 or such persons, have committed such, or such
 sins, we may be sure they are guilty accord-
 ing to that vulgar saying, and thereupon we
 may report what we hear, with as much con-
 fidence as if we had seen it our selves; be-
 cause where is *smoak*, there is fire also.

Ans. If that be true, that wherever
 there is *smoak*, there is fire too, it doth
 not at all follow, that men are indeed
 guilty of the evils they are reported to be
 guilty

guilty of, either in whole, or in part: For, though that saying should be true, yet the *Parallel* and the *Conclusion* is notoriously false; namely, that because there is no smoke without fire, therefore there are no untrue and lying Reports of men; or that it necessarily follows, that whatever men please to reproach each other withal, is undoubtedly true; that is, that they are really guilty of the crimes laid to their charge. I shall give you several instances. *Joseph* was charged with attempting to commit folly with his Mistress, *Gen.* 39. 13. 20. for which pretended crime, he suffered Imprisonment, *ver.* 21, 22. But was *Joseph* at all guilty? no, not at all, 7, 8, 9. 13. although he suffered as a guilty person. Holy *David* was charged with *Treason* against *Saul*; *Saul*, and others reported, that he sought the Kingdom, and would have supplanted *Saul*, *1 Sam.* 18. 8. *1 Sam.* 21. 7, 8, 13. for which *David* was persecuted by *Saul*, and others: but, Was *David* guilty of *Treason*? no, in no wise; for once and again, when God delivered *Saul* into his hand, he would

not

not touch him, but protested against it,
 1 Sam. 24. 26. Chapters. Yet for all that
 David was still under the charge and re-
 port of Treason ; although he was as
 guiltless of it as the Child unborn ; and
 every where almost in his *Psalms* he
 makes sad complaints against his *Reproa-
 chers*, and did appeal to God against them,
 which he durst not have done, had he
 known himself guilty of the crimes re-
 ported of him. Blessed *Jeremy* was a man
 of *Reproaches* also, although he still
 pleaded not guilty, and was undoubtedly
 guiltless of the Crimes that many of his
 acquaintance reported of him. *Meek, and
 humble Moses* was reproached for taking
 too much upon him, Numb. 16. 13. but, Was
 he guilty of it ? no, not at all. The
 great *Apostle* was charged with a heinous
 Crime ; namely, that he preached that men
 might do evil, that good might come of it,
 Rom. 3. 8. and many other foul enormi-
 ties were reported of him, of all which he
 clears himself in his *Epistles*, and cer-
 tainly he was guiltless of them. And who
 was reproached more than *Jesus Christ*
 him-

self, the Lord of glory ; *His acquaintance*
said, and reported of him, that he was a
glutton, and a wine-bibber, Math. 11. 19.
that he wrought miracles by the Prince of
Devils ; that he had a Devil, and was
acted and carryed on by the Devil, Joh. 7.
20. and that he was mad, Joh. 10. 20.
and I hope you will not say he was guilty
of any of the said Crimes.

Object. But some may Object, that evil
reports were raised and spread abroad of
them by wicked men, and such as hated
them ; but, if we hear evil reports of men,
from such as are good, and such as love them,
we may believe them, and speak of them to
others as truths.

Ans. That these were wicked, and
haters of them, who reproached them, I
own ; and so may they, from whom you
have such reports for ought you know.
For you know all is not gold that glisters ;
many go in *Sheeps Cloathing*, but indeed
are *ravning Wolves* ; and it is very pro-
bable that they are such, as bring you such
Reports ; for I have shewed you, *The*
practitioners of evil speaking, and blasting
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the good names of reputed Godly men, are generally marked out in Scripture, for wicked men; and their practice is most wicked and abominable in the sight of God and Men.

Secondly, It is certain (whatever they pretend) they do hate them whom they reproach, or spread an evil report of; for, a greater sign of hatred they cannot shew, than by robbing them of their good names, as I have shewed before. For, did they love them, they would not hurt or prejudice their Reputations; but they would endeavour their Conviction and Repentance, their Honour and Happiness: And it is well known, that Hatred, desires and seeks the ruine of the person hated, and Love desires and seeks the welfare and prosperity of such as they love; for if love thinketh no evil, 1 Cor. 13. then certainly it will do no evil to men.

Thirdly, You have heard it proved and demonstrated, that you must not speak evil of good men, although you had the said evils reported to you from, or by, good men; and therefore it will not at all excuse you, or acquit you from guilt, because

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because you had the *Reports* from good men.

Fourthly, *Job* was greatly reprov'd; Evil reports were rais'd and spread of him, not only by the Devil, but by his *Friends*, who were good men; although God himself testifies of him, that he was a *None-such*, *Job*. 1. 8. *Job*. 23. *Job* was perfect and an upright man, one that feared God, and eschewed evil; yet notwithstanding, his *Friends*, though good, accus'd him of many crimes, and reported that he was a foolish and an envious wrathful man, *Job* 5. that he was but a Hypocrite, chap. 8. that he forgot God, and did not pray to him, and many such like evils. Now, Who will say that *Job* was such a man, as they said he was? or that he walk'd as they reported he did? There'sore this vulgar saying, which is so generally received, is proved to be false and groundless; and men and women may be ashamed to own or make use of it. For, should it be own'd for a truth, it would condemn the Lord *Jesus* himself, and almost all the generation of the Righteous; justify
and

and confirm the slanders of all Reproachers. For, Do not Divine and Ecclesiastical Histories inform us abundantly how the best of men have been reproached and defamed? The primitive Saints were reported to commit filthiness in their Meetings; to murder and eat their own Children, and many other abominations were reported to be committed by them. Now, Do you not believe they were belied? and if so, Why should you not think such as have evil Reports raised of them now, are belied also? Why do you not hold them guiltless, until you are assured by sufficient legal proof, that they are guilty of the evils charged on them?

Objection. It is further objected, But if it be taken for granted, that men do sin, in raising and spreading evil Reports of men; yet we hope, it is not a sin to hear and receive such reports when brought to us; for, should we not hear them speak out, what they have to say, we may provoke them to wrath and anger against us, and that will be their sin.

Ans. First, God hath expressly forbidden

us to receive, or take up a Reproach against our Neighbour, Psal. 15. 3. and therefore we must not hearken to them, nor receive them; for, by hearkening unto them, you put your selves under temptations, to receive, believe, and entertain the *Tales* that are brought to you of others.

Secondly, By hearkening unto the *Tales of Defamers*, you do greatly encourage and animate them in their *accursed and diabolical* work. For, as we say, If there were no Healers, there would be no Stealers; so, if there were none to hearken to them, and receive their stolen and unlawful wares, they would soon be weary of their work.

Thirdly, By hearkening to them, you countenance them in their sin; yea, you are thereby *partakers of their sins*, unless you do reprove them, and declare your detestation of their waies: otherwise by hearkening to them, you make your selves one with them, and joyn issues in sinning against God and men.

Fourthly, *We must not sin, that good may come of it, Rom. 3. 8.* or to prevent
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another mans sinning; nor displease God, and wrong men, to please and gratify any men in the world. If men will sin because I will obey my God, and refuse to comply with them in sinning, their doing so, is not my sin; but *Theirs*; and they shall answer for it, not I. But should I encourage them by hearkening to them, then their sins will be mine.

Quest. *If you ask me what is your duty, or what you ought to do, when you hear any to speak evil of others, especially of reputed good men.*

Ans. *I Answer first,* You should know of him, or them, if they do certainly know that the whole of what they do report of them, is true.

2. Whether they have no *grudg, malice, hatred, or envy* in their hearts against them; or whether or no they do truly and heartily love them.

3. Whether, if they do certainly know them guilty, as they do report them to be, they have dealt with them according as the Lord requires them, in *Math. 18. Gal. 6. 1, 2.* Whether they have laboured

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with

with them, *by the spirit of meekness*, and wrestled with God for them, to bring them to *Repentance*.

4. Whether, they are sure (if guilty) they have not repented; for, if they have repented of their sin, then you ought to forget and bury it, and not to blaze abroad their nakedness which is now covered; for, *Repentance* sets a man in the same state he was in before he sinned, both before God and Men.

5. You shall know of them, if they can prove, that God hath called them to divulge the sins of such persons in such a way as they do; or, whether the Devil and their own Lusts have not put them upon it.

6. You should know of them, what their ends are in reporting the sins, and laying open the nakedness of men, *whether they do design and aim at the pleasing of God*, and profiting their Souls; or whether they do not design and aim at the blasting of their good names, and rendering them odious to you? whether, to call your help and assistance to endeavour

your to bring them to *Repentance*, or to set you at a greater distance from them, and to harden your hearts against them? If they say, They do seek the glory of God in what they do; then tell them, *that so did they pretend to do, who murdered the people of God, Isa. 66. Joh. 16.* and tell them further, That the holy God *abhors robbery for burnt-offerings*; that God will be glorified by men in his own way; and that he will not have men sin to glorify him. If they say, They seek the good and profit of such as they defame, tell them *that is false, for the way to do a sinner good, is not to back-bite him, and speak evil of him behind his back, but to tell him of, and to reprove him for his sin, to his face.*

Now if they cannot give you clear and satisfactory answers to these questions; yea to all, and every one of them; then I advise you to protest against their waies, labour to convince them of their error, and reprove them sharply, yet meekly of their iniquity.

2. Be sure you give no credit to their

Q 4 words,

words, nor seem to approve of them, or give them the least entertainment in your hearts; but declare your indignation against, and your abhorrence of, their back-bitings and evil-speaking; and tell them, that *God hath expressly forbidden them to speak so, and such things, to you of others; and also forbidden you to hear or hearken to them;* and therefore you may not hear them, but, in love to God, and Zeal for his glory, the good Names and Reputations of men, yea, and the good of their own Souls; you cannot but protest against and declare your loathing and detestation of their ways and practices. And further you should tell them, that you and they have your sins and iniquities; and possibly others may see as many black spots in your faces, as you do pretend to see in theirs. That you have other work to do at home, namely, *to look after, to Judge, Arraign and Condemn your selves for your own Iniquities;* to confess them, pray for the pardon of them, mortifie and subdue them, watch and fight against them, and that you are command-
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ed to *do your own work, and prove your own waies, Gal. 6. and do your own business, with quietness, 2 Thes. 3. 12.* That you have no time allotted you to hear, or speak of others faults, unless you had a call from God to do so; and that you have no opportunity given you to hear, ken to their defamations. That you dare not bring your selves under their guilt, *by giving them any Countenance, or Entertainment.*

Quest. But may we not speak, and hear others speak to us of the publick, apparent, and notorious sins and wickednesses of some men?

Answ. Yes, we may; if they are publique and notorious sins, and sinners. If they are such as practise notorious abominations, walking in the way of their own hearts, adding Drunkenness to Thirst, Deut. 29. 19. who publish and proclaim their own wickedness, and lay open their own shame and nakedness in their words, carriages, and practices unto all men. Surely we may say, that a common Drunkard, and one known so to

Q 5 be.

be to us, is a *Drunkard*; that a *Persecutor* is a *Persecutor*; That a *Thief* is a *Thief*; that a *Whoremonger* is a *Whoremonger*; a *Cheater* is a *Cheater*; and that a *Swearer* is a *Swearer*; that a *Liar* is a *Liar*; and that a visible and apparent *Hypocrite*, is a *Hypocrite*, &c. for these things are known and read of all men; and so we cannot wrong them, nor reproach them by speaking and declaring of them what evils are so notoriously and commonly practised by them. But these are not the persons intended in this discourse; no, but such as are esteemed civil, moral, or religious men, and are reputed so to be, amongst, or by honest men, who know them. But such persons as are so notoriously wicked, as to walk, lye, and wallow in the filth of any wickedness, and are open and publick plagues, grievances, and Annuances, to the persons and places where they live; these you may, as you have occasion, speak of, so as you must not, may not do of others. For you cannot defame such, as by their usual practices have, and do continually make themselves

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infamous and abominable. *You cannot deprive such of good names, who have none amongst men, but have, by their own words and deeds, already lost them.* You cannot thereby make them more vile than they have made themselves, nor expose the Gospel and Religion to Reproach. For, their Lust is their Religion, though they profess to know God. *Religion and Holiness is not concerned in their names,* neither is the Lord tender of them, neither doth he value or esteem them, as he doth other men; neither can they lay claim to a good name, or challenge it as their due; for they have wilfully and practically disowned and rejected it by their wickedness. And here also I would hint several cautions or words of advice. *First,* That when you speak evil of them, or of their sins, you do it to some good end and purpose; namely, to affect your own and others hearts, and to cause a holy sorrow both in them and your selves, for their wickedness, because God is dishonoured by them. 2. To caution and strengthen

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your selves and them against such sins.
 3. To quicken your care and watchfulness against those sins, that you fall not into them. 4. To move your hearts to pity, and pray for them. 5. To raise up your hearts to admire and adore free grace, that you are not like them; to thank and bless God that you are not as vile, and abominable as they are; and to consider that it is either sanctifying or restraining grace that hath differenced you from them. 6. To cause you to consider and reflect on your original state in sin; to remember the Rock from whence you were hewen, and the hole of the pit from whence you were digged, Isa. 51. 1. and that you were once as bad as them, Tit. 3. 3.
 7. To cause you to look into your own hearts and waies, and see if there are not as vile and hateful sins in you, in the sight of God, as you see in them. You see them Drunk with Liquors, but are you not sometimes *Drunk with Passion, Wrath, and Anger*? You hear and see them commit lewdness, but are not your hearts full of *Covetousness and Worldliness*? You hear

hear them swear, but are not your hearts full of *Pride and Envy* ?

2. You must not speak of them and their sins, to make them an abhorring and an abomination unto men, and to shut them out of their pity and commiseration; or so, as to render them altogether *hopeless and desperate*; for then, all means used by any to do them good, to convince them, and bring them to *Repentance* will be in vain. Except they are the *Lords publick, and probably implacable, Enemies*; and such as are obstrueters and hinderers of his glory and interest in the world; and such as do withstand and oppose such as labour to exalt his name, honour, and glory in the world. For God hath set a *black mark on them*, and declared them to be a most hateful and vile generation of men. They are called *Hypocrites*, Math. 23. 13. 30. *Satan*, Revel. 2. 10. *Serpents and Vipers*, Math. 23. 33. *Lyons*, 2 Tim. 4. 17. *Doggs*, Phil. 3. 2. *Haters of, and Enemies to God*, Rom. 1. 30. Luk. 19. 27. God hath marked them out for destruction; and they have made themselves odious and abo-

abominable to God and men ; yea, such are the great Enemies of mankind. So that I doubt not but that we may speak of, and declare their abominations unto one another without sin, and endeavour to undeceive such as we know are deceived by them, and have them in esteem, and are tempted to follow them in their iniquities, because of some place, title, or office they have or bear ; or, because they are reputed to be learned and wise. For by this means we may prevent the ruine of Souls, and the practice of many sins, which many are emboldened to commit without scruple, by their example, as sad experience shews. But now for other notorious sinners, we should be very tender of, and be more cautious how we render them vile, lest we harden them against all Reproofs and Counsels.

Quest. But when it is a common Report, and in every mans mouth (as we say) we may believe, receive, and report what ever we hear of others, may we not ? especially, if they have been reputed good men ?

Ans.

Answ. No, in no wise; for, *as fame is a Lyar* (as sad experience shews) so it is certain, that, that *Report* which is at first raised falsely and groundlessly, by the pride, malice, envy, and wrath of one, will quickly spread all over City & Country, and become every ones talk; and it is most certain that *false Reports* do and will spread abroad, be received and talked of as much, as true and real ones are. For men (especially women) have *Athenian-like spirits*; they are all for hearing and telling of news, whatever the matter be. *But my Book-seller constrains me to make an end; and therefore I am forced to omit and pass over many things necessary and usefule, which I thought to have spoken.* Wherefore, I shall conclude with a few words of *Exhortation*, and a few words of *Direction*. *First, of Exhortation.*

I. To bespeak all persons into whose hands these lines may fall, to read them diligently, seriously, *and with a single eye*; with designs and resolutions, with prayers and watchfulness to profit by them; that

that they may be powerful to *convince* you of, *humble* you for, and *convert* you from the practice of the abominations detected in them ; and not to judg, censure, and condemn them, because they do not *suit your humour, but condemn your practice.*

2. Be perswaded, to *reflect on your waies, and examine your practices,* and seriously consider what you have done, and how you have used your Tongues. Weigh and ponder well what you have *read,* and then ask your Consciences if you are not *guilty,* yea, if you are not deeply guilty of this *foul sin, of this horrid abomination, of murdering and defiling the good names of men, with your back-biting, whispering, and defaming Tongues ;* as also by *receiving and entertaining such evil reports* as have been brought to you of others. Give your *Consciences* leave to speak out, and do not *snub* them. Yea, I would advise you sincerely to desire and pray, that the *spirit of God* may help you in the work. And be entreated to ask your hearts again and again, if you are not
deeply

deeply guilty of murdering good mens names with your Tongues? Have you not employed your glory (your Tongues) *Psal. 30. 12.* in that filthy, base, diabolical, and dirty work of speaking evil of others? Have you not sate in your own, or others houses, and heard, believed, and entertained defamations, and evil reports of persons, which some hypocritical (though high Professors) have brought to you; which malicious, envious, *tattling*, idle busy-bodies have brought to you of others? and have you not spoken of, and reported them to others, talked and pratted of them? If so, then great is your sin, and great shall be your punishment without Repentance. And let me speak a word to women in particular. Do not you ordinarily in your visits most sinfully and shamefully raise and spread abroad evil reports and defamations of others to one another? Do you not usually tattle and talk to each other of others supposed or real miscarriages, as if you had nothing else to do? certainly you do. Yea, do not almost, if not all the Reproaches and evil Reports that are abroad, come from you? and are they not the woful fruits of your carnal visits, and work there? Surely they are. Ah, women, women, consider, and lay to heart how you have with your *tattling Tongues* in your Visits and Carnal meetings, *stab'd, wounded, murdered and polluted* the glorious name and waies of Jesus Christ; the good names and reputations of his Ministers and People, with your whispering and back-biting Tongues? Oh! consider and

and lay to heart in season, what a deal of mischief you have done, and how many hearts you have saddened and grieved, hardened and caused to sin; and what a world of guilt you lie under; and Repent, Repent, and do no more so wickedly.

3. Be perswaded to *avoyd the company of talking, tarling Back-biters*; and, in case you be at any time in their Company, and you hear them begin to back-bite, and speak evil of any; either reprove them, and endeavour with *wisdom and meekness* to convince and hinder them in their wicked works, or by withdrawing from their Company, or both, as you have opportunity, lest you be partakers of their sin and punishment, and in any wise keep you from the *accursed thing* that you find amongst them; comply not with them.

4. Be perswaded to keep in your hearts, (and manifest it in your carriages) as *high esteem of, and as great respect unto reputed good men*, after you hear them reproached, as you had before, and do not (as too many do) cast them out of your hearts and communion, because some wicked tongues have laboured to make them vile to you. For if you do, you prosecute the Devils designs, and gratifie him exceedingly; *strengthen the hands of Back-biting Defamers*, sin against God, and wrong your own Souls: And, for ought you know, the Reproached are guiltless of the sins, they are defamed for; or if guilty, they have Repented of them.

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5. Be perswaded to *Watch your hearts*, and set a guard upon your *Tongues*, that they sin not against the good names of others. Yea, you must keep your *Ears* shut against hearing of evil Reports, if ever you will keep your *Tongues* from speaking them. For experience shews beyond all contradiction, that the evil the *Ears* takes in, vents its self again by the *Mouth*;

6. Be perswaded to give a *satisfaction*, and make all *speedy* and *full restitution* to all such as you have by *back-biting* and *defaming*, wronged and defrauded of their good names; and remove all the *stumbling blocks* you have laid in their way, to cause them to sin and hinder their *Salvation* out of the way, lest by the countenance of them, through your neglect, (as they were laid in their way by your *Tongues*) you cause them to sin more, and thereby provoke God to pour out his *Wrath* upon you, to the uttermost.

7. Look upon *Back-biting Defamers*, and *Whispering Reproachers* to be the worst of men; the very *dung* and *dross* of the earth, until they are converted, and declare their *Repentance* and *Reformation*. Look upon them as *Enemies* to God: *Common Plagues* to mankind, and wicked malicious *Enemies* to you, as any you have in the world. For assuredly, such as will *murder thy good name*, will also *murder thy Life*, were it not for fear of *humane Laws*; for they may as lawfully do the one, as the other; and I doubt not

not but that both are alike abominable to God, although they are not so in the account of ignorant men.

Now to inforce these things on your hearts, be pleased to consider.

1. That the great and all-seeing God is privy to all your ways. He searcheth out the hidden works of darkness; whereof this is one of the vilest and blackest. God observes your *imagining evil in your hearts against, or of one another*, Zach. 7. 10. 8. 17. He minds and takes notice of your sitting and hearing railing Tongues when they bring you evil Reports of men, and when you, believe, receive, and entertain them. *God hears your most secret whisperings of evil Reports against men, or of men, to their Reproach.* And although men may never detect and find you out, yet God and your own Consciences will effectually do it one day; and he that seeth in secret, will reward you openly.

2. Consider, that it is a very easie matter to commit this sin, and be guilty of this murder. It may be some will perswade themselves that they are *guiltless*, when they sit at their Tables, lye in their Beds, stand in their Shops, &c. and talk to one another of others real, or supposed miscarriages, and back bite them; but you will assuredly find one day, that this is the sin I have been detecting of, and that by your so doing, you are *guilty of murdering and defiling the good names of good men*, when you so talk of them, unless you have a call from God, and not from the

the Devil to do so. Yea, you are guilty of this sin, when you speak matter of truth, and when you undervalue and speak slightly and contemptuously of good men; or such as have been reputed such, unless they are apparent & notorious Apostates, or speak contemptibly and vilifyingly of the gifts & parts of Ministers, & other good men:

3. Consider, God will cause the same measure to be given to you, that you have given to others. If you will Reproach your Neighbours, God will stir up some or other to Reproach you, *Math. 7. 1, 2, 3.* If you have cast dirt on your friends or acquaintants, it is a thousand to one, but God will find out one or other to cast dirt on you. *He that sheddeth mans blood, by man shall his blood be shed, Gen. 9. 6* you have murdered others good names, and others shall kill, if not murder, yours. Thus in my unbelief I dealt with others; and thus have some been pleased to deal with me: Oh! that I could mourn tears of blood for this bloody sin of mine, though committed in a state of unbelief. God hath confirmed this truth in me, and in his wise providence repayed me with my own Coyn. But now I hope God hath pardoned me, and I do heartily pray that my Slanders may be pardoned also.

4. Consider if you have not given great occasion to many poor Souls to curse you, to hate and abhor you for the wrong you have done them by your Back-biting defamations. Have you not grieved many hearts, and caused them to sin? have you not hardened some in sin, and given others cause to complain to God against

gainst you? as *David* often did against his *Reproachers*? Have you not by your *Reproaching* of some men, caused a world of mischief of sin and wickedness to be committed; yea, have you not given occasion to the *Enemies of God* to blaspheme? And will not *God* lay all on't at your doors, and condemn you for *Malefactors*? surely he will.

5. Consider what a great and hainous sin this is, and what a world of *Serpents and Vipers* are in the *Womb* of it. It is a *big-bellied Sin*. It hath abundance of abominable cursed *Roots*, of vile and poysonous *fruits*. It is such a *Monster* as that we very seldome (if ever) find the *Lords* peculiar people guilty of it in the *Scripture*. We find them guilty of many other horrid sins, but very rarely are they charged by the *Holy Ghost* with the sin of back-biting and defaming of good men. Yea, it is generally and ordinarily in *Scripture* made the *Character* of the worst of bad men, as I could abundantly shew; and you may easily find in this *Book*, that I have written for your *Conviction*, *Repentance*, and *Reformation*.

6. Consider that you may easily avoyd this sin, if you will; there are other sins as worldly mindedness, *Pride*, *Passion*, &c. which we cannot so easily avoyd; but it is most certain, we may easily avoyd and have nothing to do with this. We may as easily avoyd this, as we can other, *Murder* and *Theft*. For men do ordinarily commit this sin upon a *deliberate choyce*. They commit it because they will commit it, not through weakness, but wilful wickedness, as hath been shewed.

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7. Consider how the blood of mens good names, which you have been guilty of, will shortly wound, stab, and torment your Consciences (although they are now asleep) they will be stung and horribly distressed with the guilt of the blood of good names. This sin (without Repentance) will be a terrible *gnawing worm in thy heart to all eternity*. It will be an *Adder* that will not be charmed.

Oh! poor Soul, what wilt thou do when thy soul shall hear, & thy conscience feel the cry & weight of blood? when God and mens good names shall prosecute a terrible charge against thee, find thee guilty, and condemn thee for thy Reproaching of good men, and the name & glory of God in them. Oh, consider it in season, and enlarge upon it, though I may not. *So much for the Exhortation.*

Now if you ask me how you may avoyd this sin, and Repent of what is past. 1. I Answer, Intreat the Lord to open your Eyes, convert your Hearts, and give you Repentance unto Life. Entreat the Lord to put his fear into your Hearts; fence, guard, and guide your Tongues, that you sin not by back-biting and defaming, *Psal. 141. 3.* 2. Do not only desire and pray to God to keep your Tongues from this Iniquity, but be you upon your guard, and keep you selves likewise, *Prov. 4. 23. Psal. 39. 1.* For as it is our duty to commit our selves to the care and protection of God, so also it is our duty to keep our selves from all Iniquity; and unless we keep our selves from sin, we cannot expect that God should keep us; because God hath promised to keep us from sin *in the way of our duty.* 3. Mind your own work and business and meddle not with others, which do no way concern you, *Gal. 6. 4. 1 Pet. 4. 13. 1 Tim 5. 13.*

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For assuredly, one great occasion of this great wickedness, is persons meddling with others *business*, and neglecting their own proper work.

4. Get & keep the fear of God in your hearts, and remember that the Eye of God is alwaies on you, and his *Ears* open to hear and observe all your thoughts, words, and waies, that you may stand in awe and sin not, *Psal.* 4. 4. *1 Sam.* 12. 24.

5. Consider, and lay to heart your *own sins and evil natures*, and what cause you have to keep at home; what abundance of Lusts you have in your own hearts; how ready they are to imbrace and joyn Issue with temptations; how many failings you have been guilty of, and how often you have exposed your selves to Reproaches from others, *Gal.* 6. 1. *1 Cor.* 9. 27.

6. Would you be kept from this accursed thing, this pernicious abomination; then Repent of what is past, and recover the favour of God, sue out your pardon & peace, that God may return to you, and you to God; that God may be well-pleased with you, and delight to guard & keep you from committing this great wickedness. For, while there is an accursed thing in the Camp, and this sin remains unrepented of: God will not be with you, nor hold the Reins of Lusts in his hand, but suffer you to close in with Temptations, to fall and break your bones. God will leave you to your selves & temptations, because he is displeased with you.

7. Prosecute the great work of Mortification; Cut down this Goliath with the sword of the Spirit. Lay the Blood of Christ to the Roots of back-biting. Arm your selves against the causes of this wickedness, & fight against them in the light, life, and power of Christ until you have destroyed them; and in your so doing, the God of peace shall be with you. Amen. FINIS.

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